

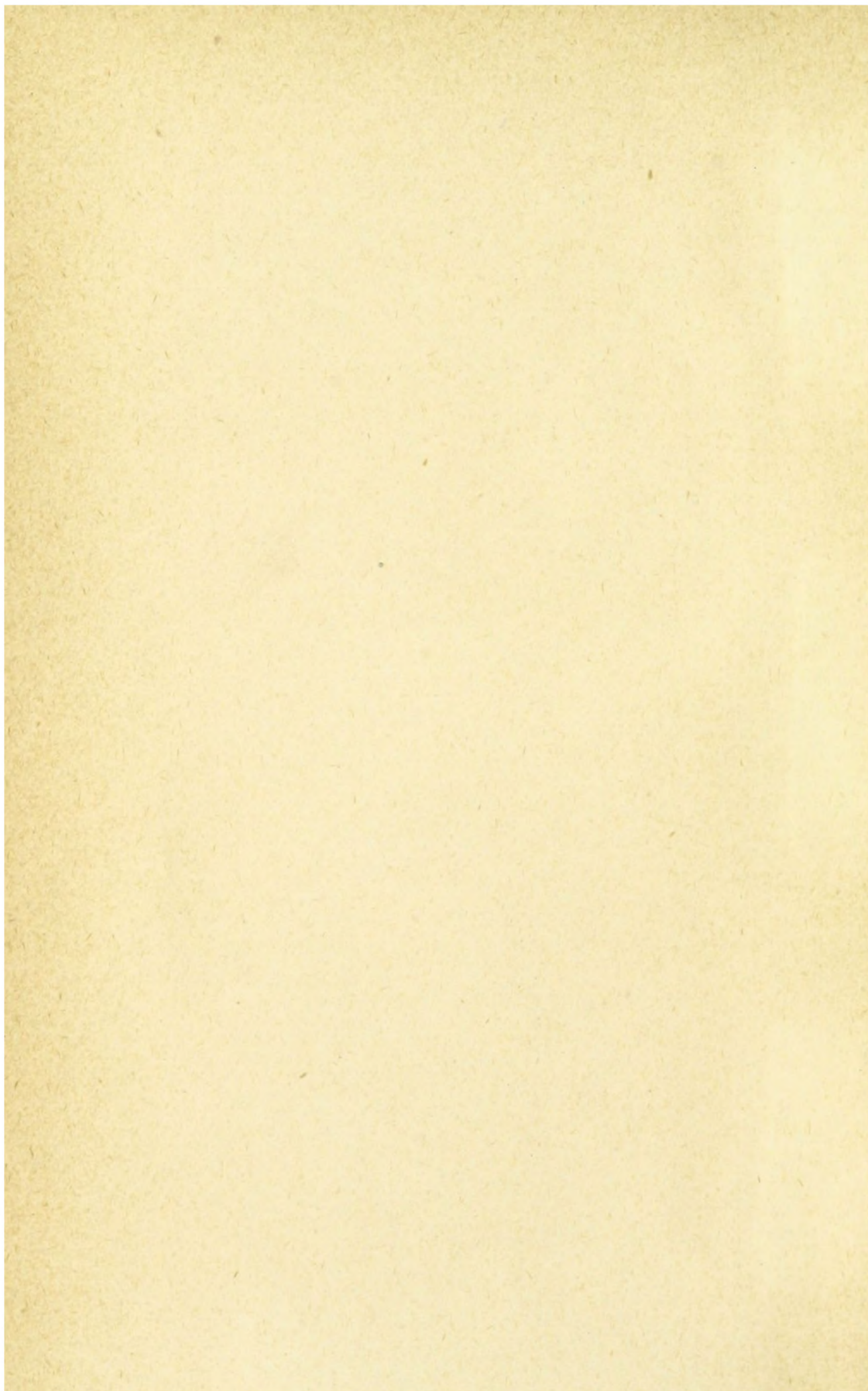
THE STORY HUNTER



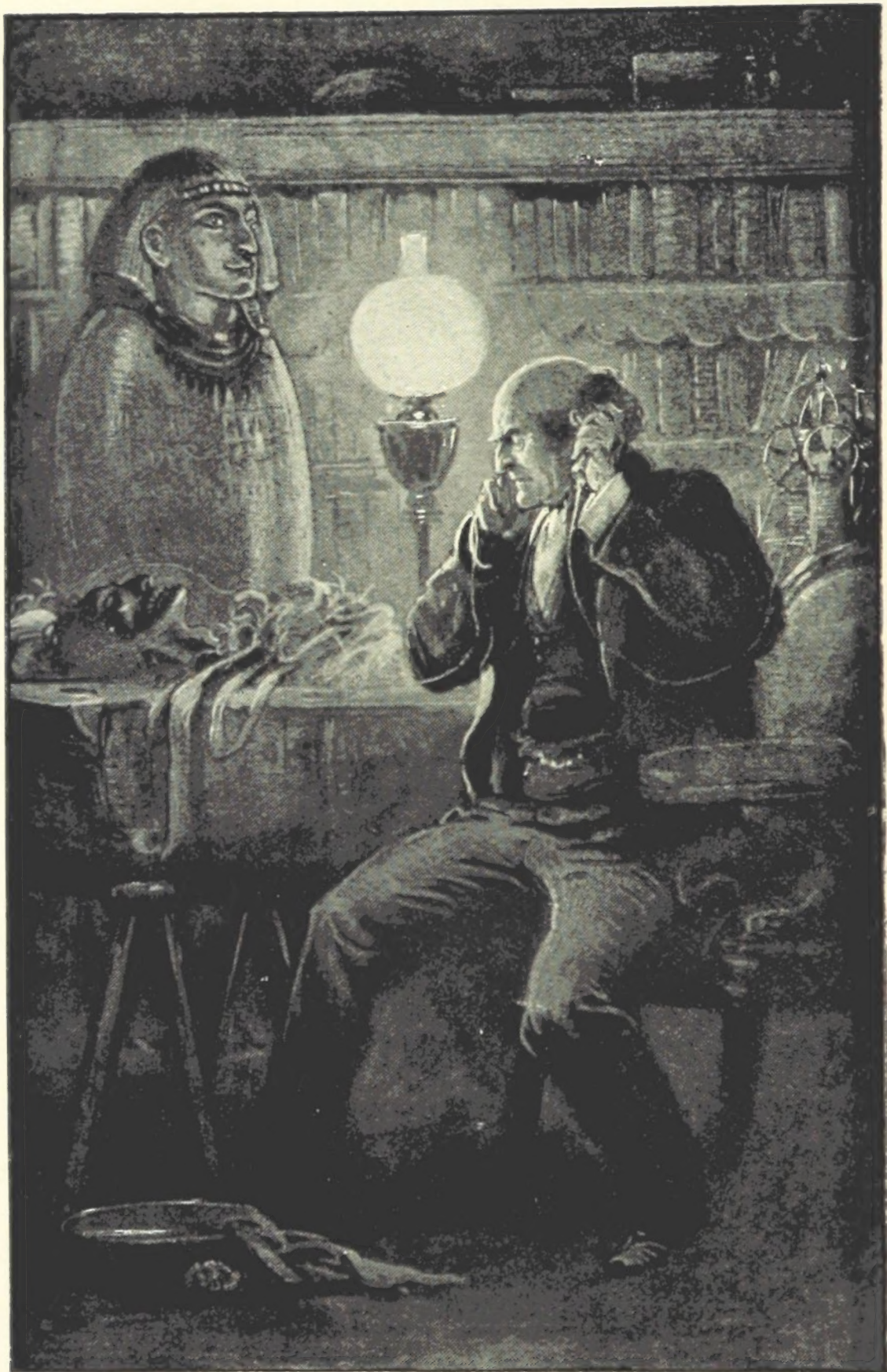
E.R. SUFFLING







THE STORY HUNTER



“Into the mouthpiece of the machine I spoke, asking, ‘Do you hear me?’”—p. 21.

THE STORY HUNTER

OR

TALES OF THE WEIRD AND WILD

BY

ERNEST R. SUFFLING *K*

*Author of "Afloat in a Gipsy Van," "Jethou, or Crusoe Life in the Channel Islands,"
"Life on the Broads," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL HARDY



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1896

PREFACE.

A YEAR or two since, when I wrote *Jethou; or Crusoe Life in the Channel Isles*, I received a large number of press reviews and criticisms, all but two of which were of a very satisfactory and encouraging tone, and spoke so flatteringly of my future career as a writer of fiction, as to cause a blush—perhaps of modesty—perhaps of hope—to suffuse my lily cheek. One of the adverse critics, who must have been troubled with liver complaint in some form, took a pessimistic view of my work, doubting the facts contained in the book, and—in a literary sense—running amuck with the fictional portions. But, as he unwittingly helped the sale of the first edition of *Jethou*, I thank the wielder of this biting pen.

The other detractor found no particular fault with the book, but thought the writer somewhat *lacking in high invention, i.e.*, in imaginative power.

Of course few persons see their own faults, and I had never even dreamed that I had any lack of inventive power. But now that my deficiency has been suggested

to me by the critic of London's leading daily newspaper, I venture to place the present volume before the public as an effort towards the vindication of my imaginative power, and with the earnest hope that something may be found in it of sufficient interest to repay the reader for the time spent in its perusal.

E. R. SUFFLING.

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THE STORY HUNTER.

INTRODUCTION.

A HYPNOTIST ON WHEELS.

MOST men have a hobby of some kind, and I am certainly no exception to the general rule. Some love boating ; some painting ; others carving, angling, walking, shooting, or one of a hundred other diversions. The hobbies of noted men would fill a goodly volume—thus Tosti is fond of upholstering ; Gladstone of tree-felling ; the Sultan of Turkey is an amateur carpenter ; the Shah of Persia photographs everything he can aim his lens at ; the late Lord R. Churchill collected the teeth of criminals ; H.R.H. the Princess of Wales has a passion for specimens of lace ; and so on.

Now I love none of these pursuits, but will confess at once that my delight is *a good story* ; something out of the usual rut of everyday fiction ; something fresh, stimulating, racy ; and to gratify my hobby I have been for many years a most voluminous reader.

No scientific works for me, thank you ; no dreary, three-volume, society novels ; give me good, sterling

works of *fiction*—neither namby-pamby on the one hand, nor revoltingly realistic on the other—but sound, entertaining, well-worked-out fiction.

Generally speaking, my experience of writers is disappointing. One soon finds out their style of working, and after reading a short way into a story, the *dénouement* can frequently be correctly conjectured. Some authors are aware of this, and purposely lead their readers upon a wrong scent quite up to the penultimate chapter, and then suddenly surprise them by reversing their preconceived idea of the final disposition of the characters represented. This is extremely puzzling to that section of lady readers who “just glance at the last chapter” before wading through the volume, and must be extremely tantalizing to them as well.

Now it so happens that I have little else to do in life but to obey my own sweet will ; no wife have I, and but few relations, and as to them, I steadfastly believe there is a great deal of truth in the aphorism, “relatives are best apart.” So strongly am I convinced of this, that I foster a fondness for peregrinating, solitarily, over the length and breadth of England, and even for making occasional incursions into Scotland or Wales.

My income is small but ample—a cosy £500 a year—upon which I can manage in comfort, especially as I have adopted a novel system of living ; novel, not because it has not been carried out to a certain extent before, but because I have made a permanent institution of it ; I am a dweller in a caravan, not merely during the pleasant summer months, but *à la* gipsy, all the year round ; and, what is more, I thoroughly enjoy my solitary life on wheels. I have no rates or taxes to pay, and if I have troublesome neighbours I move ;

in fact I am a progressive man, I am *always* on the move.

My horse and I get on admirably together: in the summer he sleeps in meadow or lane, on heath or common, while I sling my hammock in my roomy van; but in the winter I stable my steed at an inn, and, as for myself, laugh as I hear the snow-laden wind rasping vainly at the woodwork and windows of my domicile. I am snug and secure from any weather that may assail me; and with my pipe, my dog, and my books, am as comfortable and free as the Queen in her Castle at Windsor.

But all this is not my very particular *hobby*; it is simply my mode of living, and a free, healthy, Bohemian life it is.

As I have before remarked, I have a fondness for a good story; and I have a peculiar way of securing that article. I do not go to a book-shelf, get down a volume, and read a cut-and-dried version of some adventure or incident—frequently spoiled by the opinions of the writer, thrust willy-nilly upon the unfortunate reader—but I go straight to the fountain-head—to the hero or chief participator in the scenes and adventures described—and so get my story first-hand, *vivâ voce*, from the lips of the living narrator.

In disclosing how I succeed in this I must first make a confession; then my *modus operandi* will be at once plain.

I am a hypnotist.

Not a professional, séance-giving operator. I simply took the subject up as one would any other scientific pursuit, such as geology, botany, or electricity, and in a couple of years became remarkably expert in the fascinating diversion. I say *diversion* purposely,

as it *is* my diversion, wherever I wander during my nomadic life.

When a lad I read, and was enchanted with the wonderful stories of *The Thousand and One Tales, or Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, and now that I have arrived at years of sober discretion, I look upon it as my undoubted right to have a story told to me by every person I may induce to share the hospitality of my caravan.

The Sultan Schahriyar was told a thousand and one tales by his beautiful young bride Shahrazad, but as I have no beautiful young consort to spin me nightly yarns—which, coming from one brain, must necessarily have had a sameness—I have recourse to persons I meet in my peregrinations, who, after an enjoyable meal and a pipe, allow me, as a favour, to hypnotize them. The trance state having been induced in a very brief time, I then exert my will-force, and request my subject to tell me a story of anything remarkable that has happened in his experience, or with which he was connected. By this means I have listened to nearly as many recitals as Schahriyar himself; some good, some commonplace, some not worth listening to; while a few of them struck me as being very remarkable and quite out of the ordinary run of book stories. It is a selection from these which I have collected in this volume.

I must point out that in giving publicity to these stories I do not betray any trust; as, apart from having the sanction of my guests, or, as some would term them, victims—I have so altered names, places, and dates as to make the individuality of the narrators quite secure from discovery and consequent annoyance.

It may be asked, "Why do you go to the trouble of hypnotizing your guests, when they would probably tell

you a story without being placed under mesmeric control ? ”

Now I am quite aware that “The Ancient Mariner” “stopped one of three,” because the said one was *unwilling*, and therefore had to be fixed with his “glittering eye,” but *my* guests are *willing* ones. They would probably, out of courtesy to me, as host, tell me a story in a sociable manner enough, but then, would they tell me the whole truth ? Would they not be liable to gloss over certain incidents, to suppress others, and to add (for the sake of embellishment) many little touches, which, however interesting and probable, might not be strictly veracious ?

Probably they would ; and loving as I do to hear a *true* story, I always prefer to hypnotize my guest, who then gives me the facts just as they come uppermost in his mind, and his narration is free from flourishes or any great amount of extraneous or interpolated matter.

I do not know that I have anything else of a personal nature to place before the reader, but will commence the first story after I have premised it by a few words upon the narrator.

Dr. Nosidy is what many persons would term “a genius deranged.” It must, however, be remembered, that frequently only a very thin partition divides the genius from the madman, and one can recall the names of many great geniuses, who in their day were looked upon rather as lunatics than as shining lights of the world. The Doctor, by his personal appearance and conversation, did not in the least impress me with the idea that he was suffering from any mental aberration, but I must admit his remarkable story gave me grounds for surmising, that he was either a man far in advance of

the times, or else one who would, at no distant period, be likely to end his career under lock and key.

He was a small man with a bald head, round the circumference of which grew a fringe of curly grey hair. His eyes were dark and sparkling, his nose large and aquiline, and his mouth broad and thin, indicative of volubility and power, with perhaps some acerbity of temper.

When I explained to him my hypnotic powers he fell in with my humour at once, and in a few minutes, being placed in the trance state, commenced the following curious recital, which I will call "The Strange Discovery of Doctor Nosidy."

I.

THE STRANGE DISCOVERY OF
DOCTOR NOSIDY.

IT is said proverbially, and I am quite aware of the fact, that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and that sharp tools should not be entrusted to the hands of unskilled persons ; and it is because some may depreciate my knowledge, and class me among those to whom sharp tools are a danger, both to themselves and the community at large, that I have not placed my discovery before the scientific world.

I have no particular ambition to pose as a great genius or inventor ; the things which I have discovered are so simple, that anybody else, following the same line of thought, would probably have stumbled upon the same truths. That my discoveries, placed in the hands of profane or frivolous persons, would be fraught with many and great evils I do not deny, and it is for this consideration that I refrain from giving my *exact* modus operandi in this narrative.

As will be seen from a perusal of this short recital, but little further thought and elaboration are required to place my experiments among the most astounding of this most marvellous age of discovery and invention.

It is a trite expression we make use of when we say that "Electricity is in its infancy." Of course it is ; it is but in its swaddling clothes : but, by and by, it will grow such a powerful fellow as to claim by right the kingship of the whole mechanical and motive world.

Now to my mind the two greatest forces in the universe are brain power (or intellect) and electricity ; and the time is rapidly approaching when these two subtle energies shall govern or control nearly everything under the sun. My friends infer that if I had a little more brain force I should not take such absurd views of these two great *Souls of Man and Motion*, as I am pleased to term intellect and electricity. That I am not so distraught as my friends are pleased to suppose, may be gathered from the outcome of those experiments which I am now about to explain, so far at least as that can be done without actually divulging the particular secrets which, for the present, I wish to withhold, even from the great *savants* of this scientific epoch. I am afraid, however, that some reader of these lines will, if he be of a keen, searching, inventive temperament, come in a short time very near the borders of that discovery which it has taken me a dozen years to experiment upon, and place in its present unfinished form.

Even when I was a lad I was a great reader and literary delver after things which were in any way obscure, unfinished, or apparently unfathomable ; and among the many theories I formed upon subjects of which the world had written much, and talked more, without advancing any nearer to their solution, was an idea regarding the soul of man !

I may say in a few words, without giving the precise chain of thought I employed, that my idea of man's soul

was—that it was nothing more nor less than his *brain*; for is not that the very spirit, essence, conscience, reason, and vital principle of man?

Certainly: for in what degree can even a man's heart compare with his brain in the supremacy it asserts over his corporeal body? It is true that the heart is essential to him, and has a great work to perform, and can do it without help from his brain, even while the body and brain sleep; but, after all, it is a mere beautiful machine—a mechanical, monotonous slave, with nothing more to recommend it to notice than its faithfulness to its hidden duty.

Now let me affirm at once that the brain *is* the soul, and when you acquiesce in this, you will see more clearly how it is worked out as a substantial truth in my wonderful experiments, or rather, as their wonderful *result*; experiments, which after all were but my intellectual knowledge reduced to a reasonable system.

Very well. I commenced my experiments with this theory properly worked out in my own mind, but not substantiated with positive proof, *that the soul and the brain were synonymous*.

Now the soul never dies—consequently the brain never dies! It decays, and resolves itself into its constituent atoms, but it leaves behind it what I will term *brain-ether*, which is absolutely indestructible and immortal, and consequently lasts through all time.

Then came the thought—"If the brain-ether exists, where shall I find it?" I wanted to know this one thing; then I could work out the ideas I had in my mind, following them up with experiments to prove the correctness of my premises.

Just think for a few moments of the vast encyclopædia

of knowledge stored in a human brain of ordinary calibre; think of the scenes, the faces, the technical knowledge, the music, the skill, and the secrets that human brain contains, and which, when the body decays, are turned into ethereal memories—memories *not lost*, but stored up in the brain-ether for ever.

Now it occurred to me, that if I could only ascertain what became of this brain-ether as the body decayed, that I might secure some of it, and with the help of modern scientific apparatus, so far capture its treasury of knowledge as to make that latent knowledge of incalculable service to mankind.

For many weeks I thought of places likely to be the earthly resting-place of what I considered to be the fugitive brain-ether, and, like every other mortal who has essayed the same intellectual feat, I failed because I had the words, "The soul has fled," ever present in my mind.

Naturally, when a human being dies, if one says, "His soul has fled," the person spoken to directly assumes that the soul has left the body, and gone no one knows whither. But, being scientifically artful, I took an opposite and antagonistic view of the usually accepted answer, and said to myself:

"Now suppose the soul has not fled, but is still present in the cranium in the form of brain-ether."

This startling hypothesis I took and worked upon. Forsaking the common theory, I resolved to see if I could not by some means discover the brain-ether, which I was morally certain existed *somewhere*, and which I quite believed was as likely, or more likely, to be found in its ordinary resting-place—the cranium—as elsewhere.

A recently deceased body or head was of no service to me to experimentalize upon, as the spirit or essential ether would not have become free till the disintegration of the pulpy matter of the brain was complete. What I wanted was a skeleton, or even a skull, which had neither been opened nor tampered with ; and having no medical friends I was at a loss to know how I could supply my want, when a lucky accident gave me just what I required.

One day I was walking through Gower Street, London, when whom should I run against but my old friend Stairs. Stairs is an Egyptologist, great at reading hieroglyphics and cuneiform writing. Not having seen each other for two years, we naturally strolled into the Horseshoe Hotel to finish our chat in comfort, and to lubricate our throats, which have a wonderful knack of becoming dry when their owners meet old friends.

Stairs had been away for fifteen months in Egypt searching for any curious things having a commercial value in England. During his wanderings in the country of the Pharaohs, he had purchased a large number of curios, stones, amulets, rings, sarcophagi, and mummies, which he was now endeavouring to dispose of to the trustees of the British Museum.

After I had heard many of his adventures, it became his turn to inquire how I was employing myself, and this finally led to my explaining to Stairs all about my theory of the soul. Of course, being ignorant of the matter, he simply laughed, and suggested that I had better have one of his mummies to experiment upon !

Why not ?

Just the very thing ; what could be better than an ancient, unrolled mummy, some three thousand years old ?

I was positively delighted ; and in furtherance of my fancy he handed me his card, on the understanding that I was to proceed to his house, and make a selection of any mummy I thought would suit my purpose, take it home with me for a month to experiment upon, and at the end of that time return it to him.

That very evening I went to my friend's house in Gordon Square with a small covered van, and brought my precious Egyptian away, thankful to old Stairs for his kindly consideration. Stairs was off to Italy for a month, and I had his permission to do what I liked with the mummy, so long as I did not spoil its commercial value.

When the defunct Egyptian was safely deposited in my study I could have hugged him for very joy, but refrained from the embrace as he smelt a trifle musty.

I, Doctor Nosidy, scientist, mesmerist, thought-reader, and electrician, felt that evening that I stood upon the threshold of some grand discovery. The thought thrilled me as it did Columbus when he came in sight of the long-sought land, or Bernard Palissy when he discovered the true mode of firing his beautiful pottery-ware, or Galileo when he discovered the movement of the earth. I felt the sensations of these and other discoverers rolled into one ; moreover, it was my conviction that I was about to find something by the side of which their discoveries would appear insignificant indeed.

Setting my apparatus in order, I commenced work by unrolling the head of the mummy ; carefully stripping off the multitudinous layers of cerecloth, which were permeated quite through with a dark, brittle gum or resin of some kind. By and by I came to the leathery

and gum-covered visage, wrinkled, emaciated, and black with the dry atmosphere of thirty centuries.

Dark curly hair still adhered to the skull, and was not so brittle but that, after bathing the compressed locks, I could lift them with the blade of a spatula quite away from the cranium without damage. The whole head was a very fine one—the nose prominent and hawk-like, the eyes cavernous, and the mouth excessively broad and grinning; the lips were so dried and compressed that they were flat with the face. The teeth were still white and glossy, and the entire absence of any signs of decay proclaimed the fact that the owner was young at his decease.

All these features I noticed as I worked away upon my subject, and having at length uncovered the whole head, I made a small hole through the apex of the cranium with a brad-awl. This done, I inserted, into the space once occupied by the brain, the ends of the wires connected with a certain electric instrument. Into the mouthpiece of the machine I spoke, asking,

“Do you hear me?”

I listened, but of course no reply came.

How could it?

I had been much too eager to commence my work, and of a certainty, this my first attempt could but end in one way—in absolute failure, and that from three causes:

1st. The brain of a deceased Egyptian was removed through the nostrils when the embalming took place.

2nd. Even if the brain-ether still tenanted the cranium the lips could form no answer to my query, as they were so dry and parched as to have no power of movement.

3rd. If the conditions of brain and lips were favourable, and I really obtained a sound, it would certainly be in the dead Egyptian tongue, which to me would be quite unintelligible. What should I do?

My defunct monarch, or whoever he might be, was suddenly transformed into a useless incumbrance, instead of a scientific help.

Instead of hugging him for joy I could now have beaten him as a scientific fraud.

There was nothing for it but to take a day or two and think the matter out in an intelligent and calm manner.

I did think it out ; and on the third day had so far perfected my primal theory, that I resolved to give the mummy one more chance of communicating with a nineteenth-century scientist.

Starting with the assumption that the subject would have been dead from a few hours to a couple of days before the embalmers would commence their process, and that the brain being lifeless and cold, the spirit-ether might have escaped into its bony case and have remained in the skull after the actual brain-matter was abstracted by the cunning embalmer and his assistants,—I argued that it would be possible for me to communicate with this spirit-ether, which would still retain in an ethereal form the vast store of knowledge which the deceased had accumulated when on earth. In that spirit-ether would be indelibly written, as it were, a record of the whole life of the deceased, with all his cares and pleasures, knowledge of contemporary events, and the haunting memory of his sins.

Assuming, I say, that this record was present in an invisible, subtle form, how, even if I could communicate

with the brain-ether, would it be possible to obtain a reply?

As I have said, I am a thought-reader, and my hope was that, if my query were understood by the soul (or brain-ether) of the mummy, I could, by the exercise of my peculiar function of reading thought, obtain a reply.

All seemed correct in theory, and to put it to the test, I, that very evening, opened communication with my ebony subject. One wire was inserted through the cranium and the other, instead of being attached to a sound receiver, I coiled several times around my own head!

Again I put the question "Do you hear me?"

Nothing at first transpired; but, on repeating the question several times, my brain became aware of the power of thought working in the dead skull, and this thought-voice gradually became coherent, until I could actually detect the vibration of certain words being formed, which were, however, not sufficiently distinct for me to understand.

My brain was quickly tired with the intense strain of sustained thought, and, lying down on the couch, I fell fast asleep, to dream of the land of the Pharaohs.

In my dream I seemed to hear people speaking to each other, and to see them going about their usual avocations. I appeared in my dream to be inside the shop of an Eastern hairdresser, where an Egyptian fop was having his hair curled and dressed for some evening function, possibly a ball or supper. The hair-dresser and his young patron appeared to be cracking jokes in their native tongue, of which I could not understand a word, but still I laughed at their jokes as heartily as if I fathomed every quip they uttered. At length I

laughed so loudly in my sleep at one of the barber's witticisms, that I awoke to find tears of merriment streaming from my eyes.

My dream had solved part of the problem !

Of course the thought-words I had read, by means of the wire round my head, were in the *Egyptian* tongue, hence the reason for my not understanding them.

Here was a dilemma !

However, I did not give up my mummy ; for, although I could neither ask intelligible questions nor receive answers that I could understand, I obtained Egyptian *thoughts* whenever I had a mind.

I kept the royal corpse for the allotted month, and then returned it in its deal case, with a letter of thanks to my friend in Gordon Square.

A dead subject was all very well, but a *dead language* was beyond me.

So far my success was very encouraging. I had learnt, among other things, that the soul, or brain-ether, still tenants the skull after the substance of the brain is entirely dissipated—provided it has not been removed from the cavity before decay set in.

With strong hopes of better success, I now resolved to obtain an English skull and try my skill upon it.

During my peregrinations in the South of England the following week, I found myself in the neighbourhood of X—— Cathedral, and strolling, almost unthinkingly, into its grand interior, admired its decorations and memorials. It was late in the day, and as in the gathering gloaming I wandered round the solemn building, I found myself gazing upon some curious painted coffins containing the remains of certain of our Saxon kings. Gazing upon them I became fascinated, for they

suggested another step towards the realization of my grand scheme.

As I stood before these sepulchres of the long dead, I am sorry to say the longing came into my mind to possess a skull from one of the decorated coffins; and presently the longing became so intense, that, like some villainous body-snatcher, I hid myself behind a stack of chairs in the nave, remaining there seated comfortably on a hassock till the great bell tolled forth the noon of night, when, coming forth from my hiding-place, I effected my ghoulish purpose, and secreted under my cape the cranium of a Saxon monarch.

The weary hours of the night lagged in their monotonous round, for I dared not sleep, fearing I might not awaken before the opening of the south door for the eight o'clock service; but my vigil was ended at last by the arrival of a gaping old man, who came to ring the bell calling early worshippers to the holy fane. The entry of several persons to the building gave me an opportunity of walking quickly out without attracting attention, but I can scarcely describe my feelings of shame, nor is there perhaps any need of doing so. Necessity, the noble mother of invention, had made a very criminal of me; but whatever loathing I had for myself was condoned by the fact, that what I was doing was for the sake of mankind at large; and although I had purloined the principal part of a royal personage, I could not look upon it as a theft, but merely as a loan from one who had no further use for his ancient head.

A few hours brought me again to the mighty metropolis, and I quickly set to work with my elaborate apparatus, but, alas! only to be the victim of another disappointment.

Although I could obtain certain mental sounds (if I may so term them), and could, by the aid of my thought-reading power, understand that words were being thought by the brain-ether in the monarch's cranium, yet, unfortunately, to fathom their meaning was beyond me.

Pure Saxon was a language with which I was totally unacquainted!

Here was another stupid mistake of mine, of precisely the same nature as the one I made in my first experiment.

What could I do?

Very little.

I copied down, phonetically, a number of the words which the monarch was *thinking*, and showed them to a professor of Anglo-Saxon, but all he could do was to translate some of them into modern English, so giving a series of words without any sequence or connection whatever.

Angry with myself, and angry with the skull simply for being Saxon, and therefore not understandable, I took it in my hand, and, in my disappointment and rage, should doubtless have shattered it into fragments against the wall, but for the sudden ringing of my door bell, warning me of the arrival of a gentleman with whom I had an appointment.

When the interview was over my anger had ceased also, and that afternoon, with the skull in a bag, I took train for X——, and repaired to my stack of chairs in the cathedral. I hid myself again, like a felon, till the doors were closed, then restoring the skull uninjured to its resting-place, crept back to my hassock seat, and awaited the dawning.

I fell asleep, and I suppose snored, for, to my astonishment, I was awakened next morning by the

verger, who, not believing my cock-and-bull story of having been shut in the cathedral while absorbed in the contemplation of the ancient structure and its interesting relics, haled me before a magistrate.

It was with difficulty I proved my identity, and doing so cost me all the loose cash I had about me in telegraphing to my friends, before the worthy magistrate would release me, although I had been twice searched to see if anything of value was secreted about my person.

Oh, science! what miseries thou hast for ages brought upon thy noblest sons! What sorrows; what disappointments; what troubles and trials, and alas, what terms of vile durance! I, being one of thy sons, have shared all these evils, though perhaps in a minor degree!

My failures, however, were not unmitigated: I had established the fact that brain-ether and brain-thought were present in skulls, whatever their nationality, and to whatever period they might belong; my failures were attributable principally to my lack of linguistic knowledge, a lack that might easily be remedied.

My business now became to seek a skull of a more modern period. I applied at a number of likely places, and at last was successful in obtaining a fine, large specimen, which had a clean and refined appearance. I paid but a small sum for it, and carried it home to my study in triumph. Surely at last I was on the road to the development of my pet project.

After dinner, all being quiet, I commenced experiments upon the skull, and having placed my apparatus in order, I asked my usual question:

“Who are you?”

“Sidney Smith,” came the reply.

Good gracious, I thought, can this be the great wit?

"You do not mean to say," I asked, "that you are the great Sidney Smith?"

"I reckon you have just hit the right nail on the head," was the immediate thought-reply.

What a piece of luck.

"Well, Mr. Smith, such men as you the world sees but too rarely; your name is still a household word among us, being constantly quoted as that of the brightest star of wit of your day."

"Whip you mean?" came from the skull.

"No; I said *wit*; a jocular person, you know."

"I ain't no wit nor jocular person," was the response, "not as I knows what 'jocular' is exactly, but if it is anything to do with a jockey it's nothing to do with me, for I stood six feet four, and weighed seventeen stone. If you calls me a 'whip' instead of a 'wit,' there you are right, for I drove the York and Manchester coach for over twenty years."

I found my subject very garrulous, very thick-headed, and very quarrelsome—a man of high stature but low breeding; one who knew nothing of any subjects but those of a horsey nature. One day our conversation became so warm, and such a string of bad language flooded the fellow's brain-ether, that I had to disconnect my battery. I left the cranium for some days, thinking that the man's temper would have cooled down, for I supposed that when I disconnected the electric wires the current of thought ceased; but when I applied the wires to my head, I found that the old store of abuse was still at work in the brain-ether of my giant subject, and the end of the matter was, that I smashed the beautiful skull into a thousand fragments against my

study wall, thus dissipating the soul or brain-ether into space.

I did not regret the occurrence, for the fellow was most vituperative and impertinent whenever I wished to know anything of his family secrets or earthly career.

Still, when I think of it, I have a deal for which to thank that giant skull. It was during the fortnight that I possessed it that I, to a great extent, perfected my apparatus for Soul-Reading, Brain-Ether-Reviewing, Etherealized-Human-Record-Deciphering, or whatever men may term my discovery, for I have not yet invented a title for it myself.

I therefore thank that broken vase of humanity, though being broken, I cannot convey my thanks as I would wish, for there is no brain-ether left to convey it to.

Alas, poor giant!

Hundreds of skulls have come under my apparatus for examination during the past decade, and I possess facts that would make many great English families quake; facts asserted by ancestors' souls—and *souls cannot lie*—of how titles and estates have been wrongfully obtained, and rightful heirs darkly put aside to favour other candidates.

I know of facts, suppressed in history, which, were I to reveal their dark catalogue of murders, conspiracies and political intrigues, would put a fresh interpretation upon the records of our country. But of what avail would the disclosure be to our present generation? The heart of man in the nineteenth century is, what it has been in all ages, "desperately wicked."

On the other hand, it has been my good fortune to converse with kings and ambassadors, with men of learning, poets, statesmen, with artists and men

of science, even with the great Isaac Newton himself, and am now in the position of being the best-informed man, upon past history and events, of any person in the world. Men say there is but a thin partition between a savant and a madman. I know better ; I may be the former, but between me and madness a vast gap yawns, although my friends will have their little jibe at me. Great men ever had their traducers, and I, naturally, am no exception.

Of all those with whom I have chatted—and by my experiments I can converse with the spirit or soul of *any* person, provided I have the skull to which I can attach my apparatus—there has not been one equal in intellectual capacity to Sir Isaac Newton, a most steady, solid man of scientific sense.

Now Newton's idea of the brain and my own precisely coincide, and if I give *my* notion upon the subject I give his also. Here it is.

The brain is an elaborate storehouse of knowledge of every kind. It contains a record of *all* one has learned during one's lifetime ; I say *all*, because if a person has learned a thing and forgotten it, it must not be supposed that that thing has vanished from the brain ; not so ; it is faithfully recorded in the brain substance, though the mental faculties may not be strong enough to *reproduce* the particular thing or theme when wanted.

Not only is everything once learnt retained by the brain, but it also contains a record of every *action* of one's life. All these actions and events are stored away in minute cells to the number of hundreds of thousands, and yet to the human eye they are not as visible as a pin's point ; in fact, they have no dimensions whatever.

Now, supposing this theory to be correct, can we not see (and I say it with great reverence) how easy the task of the Recording Angel must be; can we not imagine the celestial one reading the record of a man's brain as easily as we poor mundane mortals can scan a book?

Are not many biblical texts elucidated by this theory; for instance, Ecclesiastes xii. 14; Matthew xii. 37; and Hebrews iv. 13?

But then the theory of the brain-ether, or the soul as some call it, goes further. I am of opinion that the soul is not *spirit* but *matter*; matter of such infinitely minute particles as to be perfectly invisible to even the most powerful microscope yet made.

Let me explain my meaning more fully.

Just as there are differences in the bulk and solidity of various materials, so is there a vast difference in the tangibility, if I may so term it, of various bodies and substances.

Take a cubic foot of steel—matter beyond all doubt—and of what closely-compacted solidity and enormous density! Then take a cubic foot of smoke, that again is matter, but what immeasurable difference in density, tangibility, and even visibility there is in the two substances!

Then go a step further, and imagine a cubic foot of gas: it is invisible, intangible, and possesses but little density, yet it is *matter*, it is not spirit.

Now, seeing the vast difference between various matters, can we not believe that the brain, instead of being soul or spirit, may still be matter of such a rare and subtle quality that there is even more difference between it and gas, than between gas and a solid lump of steel or granite?

If you can follow that suggestion you have my theory ; but having spoken of my theory I go no farther. Of what my apparatus consists I have merely hinted, not mentioning one or two of its principal conditions. My secret is of such vast importance that it would go a great way to revolutionize science, history, and even religion, and I dare not divulge it to the world at large. The more I think over the matter, the more convinced I am that my experiments have so lifted the veil of death, that I have stepped within the bounds of things which should be unknown to man.

I have passed the Rubicon of the supernatural !

I tremble at my own temerity.

I have now but one Gordian knot to sever. Shall my secret die with me, and so save the civilized world much anxiety, or shall I divulge it to a small coterie of the world's greatest philosophers, and allow them to work upon and improve my ideas, so that they may benefit mankind, without revealing the secret power, which in profane hands would prove but a curse ?

For the present the secret shall remain *mine alone*, but what I may decide to do with it in the future, who knows ?

It is not every day that one has an opportunity of receiving a millionaire as a guest, and to have the privilege of hypnotizing one is a still rarer thing, yet both these experiences have been mine at one and the same time, and I will relate how it happened.

I was staying for a few days on the Cornish coast, and had drawn my van far on to the beach, by the side of a rivulet which, coming down from low neighbouring

hills, murmured and tumbled along its rocky bed until it lost itself in the immeasurable sea.

My van was placed near some rocky cliffs, in such a position as to be snug and secluded, and yet so as to retain a view up the lovely valley through which the little river sparkled and foamed. I selected the spot because of its quietude and beauty ; I do not care for the annoyance of children, or the obtrusive curiosity of their elders, when they can easily be avoided by a little forethought.

Once or twice I noticed a tall, middle-aged gentleman roaming quietly among the rocks and pools left by the low tide, and on one occasion passed the seal of day with him in a casual manner ; but, as he seemed to be of a retiring disposition, I did not attempt to force my company upon him, and passed on.

One day I sat on a rock observing a wonderful storm-clouded sky ; I watched the great, massive, vapour clouds rolling in from the west, growing blacker and denser each minute. I noticed the hush of the air and the subsidence of the wind, and so did the little birds, for they flew twittering overhead to hide themselves from the approaching storm. Then from the clouds burst the vivid zig-zags of lightning, and the accompanying roar of crashing thunder, gradually coming nearer and nearer, more frequent and louder. Presently, with a sudden blast, the wind came hurtling down with startling force and fury, licking up the sand and shingle as it drove along ; and behind it came the rain, first a few sparse drops, then a full downpour, and finally a rushing torrent.

This drove me into the welcome shelter of my van ; but although I securely closed the door it could not keep, from my startled ears, the thunder crashes, as

they reverberated and rolled among the stupendous granite cliffs of the coast. My van shook, and my eyes were blinded by several intense flashes of the discharged electric element, which lighted up the wet rocks and the wind-swept pools with a luridly grand but awful effect.

The cliffs appeared as if they were being shattered and tumbled piecemeal to the shingle below, when an unmistakable tap, tap, tap rattled upon my door, and I fancied I heard a voice, but the crashing and roaring noises around me were so great that I paused before opening the door for a repetition of the sound. Indeed my nerves were strung up to such an intense pitch that, when the taps were repeated in a louder manner, I felt afraid to open, for fear of letting in some weird spirit of the storm.

Nervous, however, as I felt, I arose, and at the door, craving my van's humble shelter, was the silent gentleman I had spoken to a day or two previously. I welcomed him in, but he was already wet to the skin. That did not at all matter; I had plenty of dry clothes, which fitted him like his own—both his and my inches being more than those allotted to the average mortal.

In an hour the storm was over, the sun once more shone brilliantly over the heaving waters, while the larks rose warbling in the air, carolling their hymn of praise for the return of the welcome sunshine.

My guest accepted my invitation to stay and dine with me, and I found him a very pleasant companion. He helped me to prepare and cook the meal, and in the interval we played cribbage, smoked, and chatted.

He had come down to Cornwall, he informed me, to escape from his friends and mankind in general, for, having inherited some money, he was worried and

pestered on all sides by impecunious persons and institutions ; and to come to a place where he was unknown was his only means of obtaining a little peace, " far from the madding crowd."

Of course I brought hypnotism upon the *tapis* during dinner, and after the meal was discussed, he requested me to try my hand upon him, which of course I gladly did, with the result of obtaining from him the following story of " Two Ruined Towers."

I must here point out that, though while in a hypnotic trance I can cause my patient to tell me a story, yet when at its conclusion I awaken him, he does not remember a word of what he has divulged, and I do not on all occasions enlighten him ; for, as I am at times the recipient of most remarkable family secrets, crimes, and misdeeds, I dare not commit to print a tithe of what is related to me.

II.

TWO RUINED TOWERS.

WHEN about three-and-twenty years of age I had the misfortune to lose my father, an event which altered the whole course of my life, and nearly unhinged my mind. My father was an artist of some repute, and as I also loved the work, I had an ardent wish to follow in his footsteps.

At seventeen I left school, and immediately commenced my artistic studies under my father. I also became a student at the — Art School, at which, when I was about twenty years of age, I had the good fortune to gain a travelling scholarship of £100 a year for two years. The first summer I spent in the British Isles, eking out my scholarship money with the help of a small allowance from my good parent.

The winter I spent in my father's studio, and in the following spring packed up my few belongings, and bidding my father farewell, travelled to various parts of the continent, making my way gradually south as the cold weather approached. Thus, roving about, I picked up a fair knowledge of two or three languages, and when my time of travel expired, found myself in Sicily, from whence, crossing over to Naples, I spent my last few pounds in procuring a passage home on a P. & O. steamer bound for dear old England.

On my arrival I lost no time in sending a telegram to

my father, advising him that he might expect me on the following day. I kept my word, and arrived at the time I had mentioned, but, alas! I found my dear old father on a sick-bed, and was only just in time to bid him a long farewell, for he died two days after my return home.

The shock was so great to my nervous system that I too became ill, and for a long time was in grave danger, hovering between life and death, but, by careful nursing and skilful medical treatment, I eventually pulled through. My nerves were greatly shaken at the awful home-coming I had experienced, and the knowledge that I had not written to my father for three weeks previous to coming to England, so that he might know where to address me, preyed greatly upon my mind. I could not help thinking that, had my father been able to communicate with me, I might have returned sooner, and by so doing have possibly saved his life. I felt somehow guilty of a kind of moral parricide, and blamed myself for all that had happened.

It was more than I could bear to enter the studio; everything about the place served to call up memories of the past; even the trees around the old house seemed to whisper as I walked beneath them, "ingrate."

I could not bear it.

I felt hysterical and delirious, talking and groaning in my sleep; and during the day roaming about the house like one distraught.

The doctor diagnosed the case at once, and told me plainly that I must choose one of two things—a lunatic asylum or foreign travel.

Feeling his opinion to be a sound one, I naturally chose the latter alternative.

Once more I packed up my impedimenta and crossed to Dieppe, from whence I wandered, without any decided route, across France into Switzerland, from thence making my way gradually southward into Italy.

I sketched and painted, selling several of my drawings to tourists who happened to see me at work, and, I suppose, admired my productions. Painting and wandering were my day amusements, but at night I had another source of relaxation and forgetfulness, and that was my flute. Upon this instrument I played fairly well, and it was my constant practice, whenever I was in a favourable place, after my evening meal, to bring forth my instrument and set the peasants dancing. They loved to hear the merry English airs, and became quite excited over the various dance tunes I played them. Minuets, jigs, strathspeys, reels, and hornpipes, all found favour with them, and their attempts to keep step with the more lively measures were sure to bring forth a deal of good-natured banter, mirth, and merriment. I always placed a tin cup at my feet, into which the dancers could drop a small coin if they felt so disposed, and this little collection I invariably gave to relieve any case of distress or poverty in the village. The poor peasants looked upon me as a very strange fellow, for they could not understand why it was I played for money and then gave it all away again, sometimes adding to the fund from my own somewhat slender purse.

Thus I wandered, week after week, as fancy led me, being sure of a good reception in each village I stopped at, for my fame as an artist-musician preceded me, and wherever I stayed for the night a crowd would invariably assemble outside my window, ready for me to

step out flute in hand when I had finished my evening meal.

One day I found a peculiarly effective "bit" to transfer to my canvas. It was a lonely, mountainous district I was in, and I had tumbled across some finely-coloured rocks, picturesquely-disposed trees, a ruined chapel, and a turbulent, dashing, little waterfall.

I unstrapped my light-folding easel and set to work. It was a beautiful day, and I toiled on for several hours, singing and whistling quietly to keep myself in countenance and spirits, for I did not see a soul in this lonely spot.

At last I began to grow tired of my painting, and, as the shadows were beginning to lengthen, I packed up, and was about to foot it to the nearest village some four miles distant, when, mingled with the peculiar noises made by the sound of falling water, I fancied I could hear the moaning either of a human being or some animal, apparently in great distress or pain.

Listening, I caught the sound of what I took to be a faint groan!

I placed my kit upon the ground and looked around. At first I could see nothing; but after a moment's search I discovered an old man sitting among the rocks, moaning and groaning at some serious injury he had apparently received.

Forgetting where I was, I addressed the old man in English.

"Hallo, old fellow, what's amiss with you?"

He suddenly brought me to myself by replying in good English (although spoken with a foreign accent), and informing me that whilst sitting under a rocky cliff, contemplating the beautiful solitude, a large

portion of stone had become detached, and rolling upon his foot, had severely crushed and cut it.

He was a man apparently seventy years of age, with an aquiline nose, piercing dark eyes, whose depth and brilliancy were enhanced by the whiteness of his overhanging eyebrows, and a fine flowing white beard. All this I took in with an artist's eye, and made a mental note not to lose an opportunity, by and by, of painting such a wonderfully fine head, if the old man would allow me.

I tore up my pocket-handkerchief, bound up the poor crushed foot, after bathing it with cool water from the river, and set my old friend, who was profuse in his thanks, upon his feet. I ought perhaps say foot, for he could not place his injured foot to the ground, and consequently was unable to walk. I was in a dilemma; the nearest village being a smart hour's walk away, down in the valley.

"Cheer up, father," said I; "allow me to try and carry you a little; possibly we may meet some one as we descend the road."

"Nay, nay, my son," the old man replied, "leave me. Perhaps after a rest I may be able to put my foot to the ground and proceed on my way."

"No, that will never do, old gentleman; do you not know that wolves haunt these rocky heights, and would probably devour you in the night if you were left here by yourself and unarmed?"

"Ah, a sweet death, my son, but, alas! wolves cannot harm me."

I looked at him in amazement as he uttered these words, but concluded the pain had made him somewhat delirious and wild in his talk. Then I took him in my

strong young arms and carried him down the rugged path, halting every now and again to recover breath and rest my aching limbs ; for, although my burden was but a bag of bones, still, on a rough mountain path, his weight began to tell before I had gone a mile, and I feared I should become exhausted long before we reached the village whither we were bound.

Again and again I lifted the old man and carried him onward, but each time I noticed the distance was less than the previous effort had covered, and after struggling on for a couple of miles, I was forced to give in for a long spell of rest. We were now down upon the plain, and the sun was fast approaching the horizon, when my eye suddenly lighted upon an ox feeding in a little green hollow a couple of hundred yards off. Knowing that in Southern Europe oxen, to a great extent, take the place of horses, I approached it ; feeling sure that if it were an ox broken to work, I could give my old friend a comfortable ride to the village upon its ample back.

The animal stood and stared at me with its great soft eyes, and I stared back in return, but having no knowledge of the handling of cattle, I was at a loss to know what to do next. It was an intelligent-looking creature, so I coaxingly spoke to it in English, trusting that if its education had not been neglected it might understand that I meant it no harm. I took it by one of its horns, and, to my joy, the gentle beast was good enough to follow me ; and as it did so I looked at its neck and could see where the yoke had galled it, by which I knew it was used for agricultural purposes.

We soon got to understand each other, and when I lifted the old man on its back, and supported him there,

the ox moved off quietly to the village, which we reached just as the light had passed through that stage which poets and learned men call crepuscular.

We found a comfortable inn, and there I attended the old man for two or three days ; but I must own my attention was not altogether due to philanthropic motives, as I spent much of each day in painting the grand old head of my patient. As I painted, so the old man talked ; and I soon discovered he had a wonderful memory, especially for historic subjects : he appeared to have the history of Europe and Western Asia at his fingers' ends. He would have made a splendid historian, for he could remember not only the chief events of the subject he happened to speak upon, but a great many of the minor details which go to make up an important episode in history.

His conversation thrilled me, and during some of his vivid recitals I ceased painting, and sat down to listen as one spell-bound. He commenced with the struggles of the early Christians, graphically described the decline of the Roman power, and the rise of the Northern and Western nations.

Then he became eloquent upon the Conquest of England, knowing that I was a native of that land, and so minutely described the field of Hastings, that one might have imagined he had been an eye-witness. He spoke of the persons of William and Harold, the weapons and armour used, and could answer my queries so exactly, that I began to fear there was something decidedly uncanny about my model. From the Conquest he took me, in thought and word, right through the Crusades, and with sparkling eyes described the principal actors on the bloody fields of Holy Land, and

when describing the prowess and fierceness in battle of our Richard Cœur de Lion, he became so excited in his recital, that, despite his injured foot, he rose from his couch in the centre of the room, and taking up a mahl-stick, struck and thrust in all directions, to explain to me how he of the lion's heart bore himself.

I was speechless with amazement ; my crippled patient was dancing about the room with the vigour of a youth of twenty, quite regardless of the mangled foot, which apparently gave him but little concern, and less pain.

"My friend," I exclaimed loudly, "your foot!—think of your injuries! Your description is wonderful, magnificent, but do not forget your crippled state!"

"Ha!" he returned, "seven times seven have passed over me, and my foot is perfect again. See!"

Saying which he tore off the bandages, and exhibited to my startled eyes a foot without even a scar.

I now began to feel a strange fear creeping over me, and I asked him what he meant by "seven times seven passing over him?" To which question, as near as I can recollect, his reply was this.

"My friend, I will tell you what my meaning is, on one condition—that for three months from now you will not divulge a word of what I am about to speak to you. If you do, may the burden of your insincerity be on your own head! You have proved yourself a friend to a stranger, and the fact of your not knowing whom you have assisted, makes your act one of greater charity, and your kindness, like that of the Good Samaritan in my young days, shall be rewarded ere we part."

What, I thought, does he mean by the Good Samaritan of his youth? I knew of but one: he of whom we read in the New Testament parable; and I was about to

ask him the meaning of this second enigma, when he motioned me not to interrupt, and proceeded with his remarkable monologue.

“By ‘seven times seven’ I mean, that although an accident may befall me, as it may any other man, yet, after seven times seven hours have passed away, I shall be sound again.

“I am keenly sensible to pain and to all human feelings, but *I cannot know death!*

“No, between death and myself a gulf has been fixed by my Master, and though corporeal pain may for seven times seven hours rack and torture me, I am at the end of that period whole again, even though I were wounded ten times fatally.

“I am the deathless one!”

At the aspect and demeanour of my weird companion I could have shrieked with fear; his eyes were incandescent in their blazing lustre, and the locks of his beard and hair writhed to my astonished eyes like the living locks of a Gorgon.

“The stories I told you of past centuries were no mere tales gathered from books, but were from my own personal observations.

“I stood in Rome when it was in flames; I saw with these very eyes the martyrdom of the early Christians; I walked through the length and breadth of Europe while Rome, with all its power and glories, was passing away. At Hastings I stood beside brave Harold, when a short arrow, taking him in the eye, pierced brain and skull, and he fell dead beside me. I have seen the Saracens fall like mast in the autumn before the trained arms of the bold Crusaders; and when Napoleon’s army fled from Moscow I too followed them.

"I have felt the fierce rays of the Eastern sun and the biting winds and frost of dreary Lapland.

"I have courted dangers and death in all forms, but here, after centuries, I stand before you a living mortal covered with the cloak of immortality."

"Heaven help you, poor man!" I cried; "you must be distraught; mayhap much learning has weakened your brain. Rest, good father, I implore you. Rest on this couch, you will be better soon."

"Rest, rest!!" he wildly exclaimed, "there is no rest for me, nay, not even in the peaceful grave. Often and often have I stood in Death's path, and have felt the icy coldness of his breath, but, alas! he has ever passed me by unheeded."

"Surely," said I, "you do not tell me that you are he who is doomed to walk this rolling earth till the Master bids thy penance be no more?"

"Ay," he replied, "I am he—he whom men, without knowing my true name, call 'The Wandering Jew'!"

I could scarcely believe my senses. Was the man mad? or was I mad? or was it all a phantasy of my brain?

My guest held out his hand to me, which I mechanically clutched; then drawing me to the couch, we sat down together.

"Forgive me, my young friend, for the shock I have caused you. Your kindness has touched my heart, and for that kindness I will repay you, as in times past I have occasionally rewarded others of my true friends.

"Now," he continued, lowering the tone of his voice to a kindly pitch, "I dare say you have read of a

certain mighty personage, who, in the early days of Christianity, was returning with great spoils from a neighbouring country, when he was hard beset by the enemy, who, with allies, followed close upon his heels; and how to save the vast treasures he had taken, turned aside the course of a certain river, and at dead of night buried his spoils there, deflecting the river to its true course again ere daydawn."

I bowed assent.

"Now," he continued, "I know the country where this took place, and can not only point out the very river, but the identical spot in the river where that treasure still lies hidden. Have you the perseverance, vigour, and endurance to bring that vast hoard to the light of day again? If so it shall be yours!"

Hardly knowing what I was saying I replied in the affirmative, and after further conversation we retired for the night.

We stayed a day or two longer at the inn to procure mules and other necessities, and then rode off upon our distant quest.

After weeks of wandering through mountains and valleys we came to a river which flowed through a beautifully diversified country; hilly, rocky, and well clothed with trees and luxurious foliage.

Riding along the river's bank we came to a very lonely spot,—a long glen—through which the river peacefully flowed in meandering curves and foaming falls. The end of the valley broadened out into a level plain of considerable extent, and in the midst of this plain stood the crumbling remains of two ancient towers, of which little more than the foundations remained.

"Here," said my guide, "we halt; there lies our

treasure," saying which he pointed to the deep, silent stream flowing between the two massive towers.

"Now," he continued, "you must follow out the plan I have devised for regaining the wealth which lies hidden there, and carry out everything just as I desire you.

"At the small town of Y—— hard by lives the owner of this land. You will assume the character of a wealthy but eccentric (or partly mad) Englishman. You are enchanted with the beautiful views in the glen yonder, and wish to stay here for a long period, to paint pictures and to generally enjoy yourself. You would like a two-roomed cottage built near one of the towers, that you may live and sleep amid the scenery you so love to depict. You will pay liberally.

"That is all I ask you to do. We will proceed at once to the town and make these very necessary arrangements. I am your mentor, your tutor, should prying people desire to know why an old man accompanies you.

"At Alexandria I have a friend, to whom I must write for certain necessary implements to be sent to us, without which it will be in vain to attempt our quest. To procure these implements shall be *my* task. They must be sent to the nearest port, and thence may easily be brought here on the backs of mules.

"D—— is the nearest port, and there my friend Isaac Susha is harbour-master ; on my bidding he will send the goods here, free from all observation or suspicion. In the mean time our little house will be building, and you can amuse yourself with your painting, while I elaborate my plans and ply my angling rod, for there is much fish in this river. I shall make an ideal fisherman, for a flowing beard points to the contemplative man, and your true

angler is certainly of a contemplative mind ; such a man was your English Izaak Walton."

In due course the little house was built, and the implements or goods, supposed to be furniture, etc., arrived in six heavy cases borne on the backs of mules. The muleteers were paid and dismissed, and in a short time people ceased to regard us as a kind of show, and we were left in peace and quietness, except for an occasional couple who would stroll along in the evening to look at the mad Englishman and his keeper ! Now and again an old shepherd, whose flocks nibbled the juicy pasture of the plain, would come and pay his respects to us, and watch the picture growing on my canvas ; but after nightfall we were never disturbed, for the people of the district were very superstitious ; and as the towers had the reputation of being haunted, we were free from all interruption after dark.

I unscrewed the packing-cases, and found they contained sundry articles of furniture, such as folding-chairs, folding iron bedsteads, cutlery, culinary ware, etc. ; but in one of the cases was a complete diving suit, helmet, overalls, tubing, lead weight, heavy boots, and everything that a diver requires, even to a submarine lantern. Another case contained an air pump, extra tubing, crow-bars, and sundry gear.

My old friend chuckled with delight at my surprise, and his eyes sparkled as we commenced putting the apparatus together.

" Now," said he, " the inhabitants of this country are, as you know from the legend of the haunted towers which you have heard, very suspicious, and probably we shall have some official or other, making it his business to call upon us occasionally, to see what is going on,

and it will never do to let him see the pump and diving apparatus, or we should at once be haled before some dignitary, and charged with having dealings with the Evil One. Now I have a proposition to make, which is this—our bedroom lies next the river, and I suggest that beneath the floor we hollow out a small chamber, about seven feet square, in which we can keep both the pump and diving suit from observation, so that at whatever time during the day any one chooses to call, nothing will be in view to betray us.”

“Agreed!” I exclaimed; “a capital proposal; we will set to work this very night. We will excavate, and as we dig up the earth I will carry it in a basket to the river’s brink and throw it in.”

“Very well,” said the ancient Jew, “I will delve, and you shall be the beast of burden, as you suggest, for you are the stronger man.”

“But,” I queried, “as you delve beneath the surface you will find it very wet, you will catch your death from cold, and have your limbs set fast with rheumatism.”

The old Jew laughed and replied, “Death—pah! You forget, my friend, who I am. Come, let us commence.”

I looked at my wonderful old comrade and shuddered.

In a fortnight we had our secret room prepared, and everything was ready to commence our search.

The Jew had informed me that the two towers were built by the great General, some weeks after the treasure was hidden, at a time when he had reasserted his power, and was once more in possession of the country hereabouts. In the towers he placed watchmen and tax-gatherers, whose duty it was to levy toll from each vessel passing up or down the river; at least this was

what he gave forth, but it was in reality to guard the treasure lying buried in the bed of the river, which at a convenient time he purposed recovering.

For some years he was harassed by the enemy, and at length died, whereupon the enemy retook the country, and the new ruler, not being aware of the treasure buried in the river, carried on the custom of demanding toll, as he considered it a capital institution.

Years went by, men and manners changed, and the towers were neglected and fell into decay ; but around the hoary ruins many curious legends gathered, and among others one which came very near the truth, as it told of an ancient king, who, in flight, being hard pressed by his pursuers, was in such haste to cross the river that the boat was upset, the king and many others drowned, and a great deal of valuable *spoil lost in the river*.

The Jew smiled at this particular story, and remarked that although, like the legend, his was only hearsay, yet, as he received his account first-hand from a friend who was *an eyewitness* of the diversion of the river and the subsequent burial of the treasure, there could be but little romance about his version, which he averred was solid, substantial fact.

"Now," he observed in conclusion, "I am positive that the treasure was buried midway between those two towers, but whether after the flight of all these centuries we shall find it, or in what form we shall find it, I cannot say ; but if you are willing we will make the search, and if successful the whole shall be yours ; I require nothing ! The mere search is ample reward for me, as it serves to break the monotony of my existence."

We commenced diving operations in a very timid manner, or at least I did, for although I had witnessed divers at work, I had never before had any actual experience ; still, as the Jew said, " There was no hurry."

The first few nights were spent in fitting up the apparatus, in making experimental dives, and in concocting a signal code that we might understand each other, etc.

The sensation of submarine diving has so often been described that I will not attempt to state what my feelings were at the outset of the operations ; suffice it to say that they were far from pleasant, but with practice I soon became expert, especially as the deepest part of the water was not more than twenty feet, so that I did not suffer much from compression.

I quickly discovered that the bed of the river was somewhat muddy, that is to say, there was a deposit of several inches of mud or soft earth, resting upon a substratum of gravel. In some parts large beds of weeds were to be seen sailing their long fronds upward to a height of several feet : these I quickly cut away, and with great labour at length succeeded in clearing away the upper layer of soft ooze nearly from bank to bank, and for a width of perhaps twenty yards near the centre.

We worked four "turns" per night of an hour each, with an interval of half an hour between each dive, so that we were occupied from 10 p.m. till 4 a.m., when we went to bed and slept till 10 o'clock, beside obtaining several little daylight snoozes when all was quiet. The Sunday was to us a true Sabbath, and no manner of work was done, not even cooking ; we reserved that

day for prayer, meditation, conversation, and much-needed rest.

We had now been working for six whole weeks, but though everything was in perfect working order, and the river-bed was being cleared, we had no more knowledge of the exact location of the spoil than when we arrived three months previously.

The real toil now commenced ; for digging in the river-bed had to be undertaken at depths varying from fifteen to twenty feet beneath the surface. To dig on dry land a hole of four or five feet in depth is a comparatively easy task, but to dig a hole of like depth *under water* is a most arduous undertaking, a task requiring strength, perseverance, and much patience. Tools used under water are difficult to manage, and by reason of the resistance of the water lose half their efficacy. For instance, a strong man wielding a heavy hammer under water, although he may strive his hardest, and exert his full strength, can only make his blow of the same force that a child of ten could strike on *terra firma*, because the water resists his arm and the fall of the hammer, in proportion to the area of surface of his arms and the implement. I also found that when using a spade I could only remove a portion of a spadeful each time, as the current and swirl of water floated the lighter particles off, leaving only the heavier pieces upon the blade of the spade ; thus digging holes in the expectation of finding the treasure was a wearisome task, especially as I had to cease my work at frequent intervals, to allow the turbid water, thick with sediment, to become clear enough for me to see what I was about. Thus toiling on, another five weeks passed

wearily away, without the least trace of our quest being discovered.

The Jew at length began to weary of pumping air to me, and I of diving and delving, so we resolved to take a few days' rest, and decide what further steps we should take in our search.

The river was about forty yards wide, and although I had sunk about a dozen pits in the bed of the stream, I had discovered absolutely nothing.

I thought the matter carefully over each day, but could only come to the conclusion that we were either searching in the wrong place, or that the treasure had long since been washed away and lost. Still, I could not imagine how even the swiftest torrent could affect or move anything buried beneath the river-bed at a depth of four or five feet. Then it struck me that earthquakes were not unknown in the region, and a shock might have caused an upheaval of the river-bed, by which the treasure might have been exposed and washed away centuries ago by some unusually heavy flood. If this had happened, was it not also probable that the stumps of the two towers would have been rent and cracked in many places?

Certainly it was.

I therefore examined the ruined towers, but their foundations were perfect, save for a few superficial fractures. I thereupon concluded that my earthquake theory was not tenable.

I next examined the banks on each side of the river, especially the portion immediately *between the towers and the water*, and found that on one side, the side farthest from our hut or cottage, solid rock formed the principal part of the bank. From the tower on that

bank to the brink of the water was a distance of just fifty feet; but the tower on our side of the river stood within ten feet of the water, and the foundation stood upon an ordinary layer of earth, with an under stratum of gravel similar to the bed of the river.

My old friend and I could see nothing in this to assist us in any way; but when I retired to rest that night I could not help asking myself the question, "Why does one tower stand fifty feet from the water and the other only ten?"

Was it not probable that whoever built the towers would erect them at equal distances from the river? And again—If one tower were required for some reason to be nearer the water than the other, would it not be the one which was built upon the solid rock?

Over these questions I pondered and worried half through the night, while my old comrade snored away as peacefully and regularly as he had done any time during the past nineteen centuries.

Before I joined my companion in a nasal duet I came to the following conclusions:—

1. Probably centuries ago the river had been much narrower.
2. A river does not keep its exact course for ever: many things may cause it to change its course.
3. This river had not diverged much from its original course, as proved by the towers; but if it had diverged at all it was towards the eastern tower (cottage side).
4. The towers were exactly one hundred and eighty feet apart, but the true centre of the river would be forty feet from the west bank and eighty feet from the east bank.
5. River *beds* may rise or fall from their original level,

by deposits of earthy particles settling, and thus covering up what was once the true river-bed ; or by a swift river scouring off the upper surface of the bed, which would thus eventually expose anything hidden at a depth of five or six feet below the bed.

6. The deepest part of a river is usually in the centre, and there would probably be the spot where anything in the way of treasure would be buried, because of the greater inaccessibility.

Next day the Jew and I held a consultation, when we decided, after carefully weighing the above ideas, that I should cut a trench five feet deep and twenty or thirty yards long, from north to south, along the bed of the river in a line with its course, and at a distance of forty feet from the west bank, a spot which we surmised to be the centre of the river in ancient times.

Again night after night I toiled, and for three weeks I dug and delved, but this time not *quite* in vain, for at the end of this period I came upon a hard substance which I supposed to be just what I had struck my spade upon many times before—a stone. I took it in my hand, for the water was too turbid to see anything clearly beneath its surface, and felt it to be much too heavy for a flint of the size of one's fist. Probably it was metal !

My heart beat swiftly as I ascended.

I took it to the hut and examined it. It was indeed metal—it was gold !

We gazed upon it for some time, and then, placing it upon the table, I capered round it with delight. The Jew was very calm over it.

“Wait,” said he ; “this may only be a solitary nugget dropped from a boat, or thrown into the stream by some thief to hide his guilt.”

I went soberly to work again, taking with me a small basket weighted with stones to prevent it floating away. I dug, and again struck upon large nuggets, which I placed in the basket; I also found pieces of metal which had evidently been shaped by human hands, although they were in such a corroded state that I could only surmise what had once been their shape or use. I washed off the adhering gravel and took my find ashore to the hut, trembling with excitement as I did so.

Hurrah! every piece was pure gold! gold!! gold!!! Then, being thoroughly exhausted by my long dive and the excitement of my discovery, I frightened my companion nearly out of his wits by fainting, and falling like a log of timber at his feet.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, and I was lying comfortably in my cot, but with a very bad headache.

I groaned, for it at once flashed across my mind that the basket of gold was, after all, nothing but a dream, a delusion!

Calling my friend from the other room, and glaring at him the while, I asked half a dozen questions before he could answer one.

"Calm yourself, my son, and I will answer all your questions, but not before you give me your word that nothing shall excite you. Remember, that in your over-wrought state, with a burning brain, an enfeebled frame, and a naturally excitable temperament, such a thing as madness might overtake you, or an attack of brain fever seize you."

"Father, I will be a very Stoic; nothing shall unduly move me."

"Prove then that you can control your feelings by

not asking me a single question till you have eaten your breakfast."

I obeyed ; but how every morsel stuck in my throat, and had literally to be washed down with coffee. The apparently everlasting meal was at length finished, and again I put my numerous questions, and recounted my dream of the basket of gold. Then with a gesture intended to compose me, the Jew drew forth from a locker the basket of gold, and held it out to my astonished gaze.

"Gold!" I exclaimed, stretching out my trembling hand.

"Yes, gold," said the Jew, quietly placing the basket upon the table as if it contained apples. "Gold, simple gold ; would you be so weak as to addle your brain for a basketful of the vile dross ? It is at once the curse and blessing of humanity ; it kills and it saves ; it blackens the pure, and gilds vice ; it creates and it destroys, and more often paves the way to hell than builds a ladder to heaven."

What my friend said upon gold would fill many pages, but to shorten these remarks I will simply say that his eloquence and force of argument were so great, that I presently became infected with his ideas of the metal before me. I had been like a man drunk with gold, but had now become sober with advice.

My fevered brain quieted down, and I simply resolved in my mind that I should be a rich man. Well ! what of that, there were plenty of rich men in the world who lived and enjoyed their wealth, but then—unlike my ancient friend—a few short years would bring them face to face with that great harvestman, Death, and what of the riches then ?

In a day or two, having with the Jew's kind nursing and attention quieted my mind, I re-commenced my work, and found many more baskets of gold of various shapes ; battered crowns, cups, shield bosses, rings, and ornaments of all kinds, many of them with gems in them, were brought to the surface ; and one night as I lay in bed, it came into my head that I would the next night bring ashore a basketful of the loose gravel, and examine it to see if any small pieces of gold were among it.

Accordingly the next night, as most of the large pieces of gold had been gathered, I filled my basket with gravel, and took it to the hut, where I spread it forth on the table.

To our astonishment, not only did we discover small pieces of gold, but precious stones, cut and uncut, were to be seen sparkling amid the heap of gravel. The gravel was of more value than the lumps of gold !

The cut gems we put carefully by in a box, and those in a rough state, which we had more difficulty in finding because they were of a dull and lustreless surface, we placed in a large leathern bag.

I found I had literally been shovelling up precious stones when I fancied I was digging gravel, but now that I was aware of the value of the gravel-bed, I carefully brought every basketful ashore, and together we sorted over the contents.

For several weeks, night by night, I continued my work of diving, until nature gave out, and I became completely prostrate, and by my old friend's advice resolved to give up seeking for more valuables. I had gold of ten times my own weight, several leathern bags of natural uncut gems, about a peck of beautiful cut



“Precious stones, cut and uncut, were to be seen sparkling amid the heap of gravel.”—p. 58.

jewels, and enough ring-seals and ornaments to stock a museum; I was rich beyond my most extravagant dreams. I was twice over a millionaire!

The Wandering Jew had but a few more days to be with me, for he may not sojourn at one place more than six months, and that privilege is only allowed him once in each century; at other times a calendar month is his longest stay at any place. Usually he tramps from place to place, halting but a short time at each town or village; at other times he undertakes long journeys among the Caucasus Mountains, the Urals, or the Alps; at other times he hies him to Norway, Finland, and even Siberia. These journeys he undertakes with no other encumbrance than a long staff. He can accomplish feats that would be impossible to other mortals: no wild animal dare attack him; cold he can feel but it cannot harm him; sleep has no hold upon him when he wills himself to remain awake, nor does hunger have any pangs for him, as he is able to fast for weeks at a time without any great inconvenience. He speaks many languages and knows many countries. He wants for nothing, as he has the power of willing persons to give him exactly what he may require, not *against* their will, but with pleasure to themselves.

For the few days which remained we occupied ourselves in packing and forwarding the boxes by different routes, and under different disguises, to my home in distant England, in which I longed once more to set foot.

I endeavoured in every way to obtain the real name of my generous old friend, but without success, and am sorry to say he did not even give me the opportunity of thanking him for having made me a millionaire, for one

stormy morning when I arose I found myself alone ; my comrade had flown, leaving upon the table a scrap of paper bearing these words—

“My son, riches added neither to the honour nor happiness of the great king Solomon ; how, then, shall they bring *thee* peace—that peace which is the spirit of happiness—except by doing good with that which earth and water have yielded up to thee ?

“Do good with thy riches, and thy fellow men shall bless and reverence thee.

“Use thy riches in a selfish or discreditable manner, and thy gold shall turn to lead as thou graspest it, and drag thee deep down to an eternal doom. Fare thee well.

“ (Signed) JOHN XXI., xxiv.”

* * * * *

Many were the schemes which racked my brain for turning my valuables into money ; and for a long time after returning to England I did not know how to proceed, but at length hit upon a plan. The very numerous relics of pagan times I presented, under various assumed names, to museums throughout the kingdom. The gold I had no difficulty in disposing of to the large manufacturing jewellers in Birmingham. The uncut precious stones I occasionally send in parcels of a thousand to M. Koster of Amsterdam, who for the past ten years has set apart a wing of his great establishment, containing twenty-five men, who are constantly employed in cutting and polishing gems for me. These are then sent to agents in all parts of the world, and disposed of, the proceeds being placed to my account in the Bank of England.

I live as a wealthy country gentleman should, in good style, but without ostentation. I travel a great deal in the summer, and to every genuine call of distress my purse is open, but the cases requiring pecuniary aid which come under my *personal* observation are not nearly enough to absorb the amount—about £100,000—which I wish to spend yearly in charity and good philanthropic work. My money is distributed over the British Isles to charities of every denomination under the initials A. Z., which you have probably often seen in the daily newspapers, and I trust I may live for many years to bestow my largesse on cases and institutions worthy of aid.

I have more than I shall spend during my lifetime, but there is doubtless a great deal more treasure in the river-bed which I overlooked in my hasty search, and which could be made the means of alleviating much suffering, wretchedness, and distress in this country, if it were brought to light by some one who would search for it in a more diligent and thorough manner than I did, and who would, when he had secured it, put it to the same good use that I am doing. To whom could I tell the secret of the whereabouts of the ruined towers, with the certainty that he would carry out my wishes?

I wonder who would take up the search at the point at which I ceased?

By obtaining permission from the government of Z——, the river's course could be again deflected as it was in the early Christian days, and the remaining treasure systematically and leisurely recovered.

It was quite late when my guest left me that night, after having first extracted from me the promise that I would call upon him at his humble inn in the happy valley next day.

Having made a parcel of the still wet clothes I called next morning upon my new friend, and spent the day with him, wandering about the valley, and trying a cast with the fly. On parting in the evening he informed me that he was to return to town next day, and I should probably see him no more.

A day or two after his departure a man came down to the beach leading a fine piebald mare, and inquiring if I were Mr. S——. I informed him that that was my name, whereupon he gave me a note written in pencil, reading thus—

“MY DEAR FRIEND,

“I cannot allow the day I spent in your cosy domicile on wheels to pass without some little acknowledgment of the courtesy shown me, and of the kindness you extended to a perfect stranger. By bearer I send you a magpie, which kindly accept as a remembrance of

“Your obliged friend,

“H. K. K. (A. Z.)”

I have never seen H. K. K. since, although I think I could, if I wished, make a very near guess at his real name and abode. The magpie still tugs myself and home from place to place, the admired of all beholders from the beauty of his peculiar markings. He makes my caravan an object of extra interest wherever I go, simply because of the superstitious belief that a piebald horse brings luck.

Some people *wish* when they see my horse, others affirm that stroking its glossy hide helps to realize their wish. Parents whose children suffer from St. Vitus's dance have asked me to allow the afflicted ones to ride a little way on its back, in the belief that such exercise on a parti-coloured steed will effect a cure.

A jockey about to ride a race on a certain occasion begged seven black hairs from the tail of my horse and seven white ones from its mane. I granted his request, and watched him bind the hairs carefully round the handle of his riding-whip. I witnessed the race with more than usual interest, and strangely enough the superstitious jockey WON his race by a short head.

At more than one inn at which I have halted, the landlord would take no money for the maintenance of my parti-coloured horse, saying that bad luck would fall upon them if they charged for the keep of a "lucky" horse.

So much for credulity and superstition!

III.

INTRODUCTION TO "A STRANGE RESURRECTION."

WHILE travelling along the Norfolk coast, and enjoying its golden sands and bracing breezes, I fell in with a jolly old fellow who was mending one of the huge oaken breakwaters, with which some parts of this wind-swept coast are protected, to prevent the encroachment of the sea, which, year by year and slice by slice, devours the soft clay cliffs, as regularly and insatiably as a ploughboy consumes his thumbpiece after the first two hours of morning work.

The jolly one had charge of a gang of half-a-dozen semi-amphibious agricultural labourers, who were driving down the great iron-shod piles deep into the sand, by means of an erection very similar in construction to a guillotine, except that instead of the lunette a huge block of iron weighing several hundredweight fell upon the pile to be driven when a lever is pulled.

The men, with whom I conversed while they ate their noonday meal, were of the usual type of tawny-bearded, brown-faced, straight-nosed men one sees on the east coast, who, when not employed in farm work, gain their scanty living on the sea. But the ganger was a man of a

different stamp; he was short and thick like a Shetland pony, and very nearly as rugged and unkempt as one of those sturdy animals, for his iron-grey beard and hair blew about in the wind like the tattered rags on a mawkin.

He was a most jocular little-big man, full of fun and funny sayings, and the loudest to laugh at his own jokes was—himself. His laugh was hearty at any time, but on special occasions he would give a peculiar roar that would quite startle any person not used to Billy Flowerdue's wild guffaw.

I invited Billy to spend an evening in my caravan, an invitation which he readily accepted, as he was some miles from his home, and only at present lodging in the inn of a neighbouring village.

Billy opened his eyes at many of the curiosities I had picked up during my travels, and widest of all at a curious piece of work which had been made by a man in the same line of business as himself—that of a carpenter and wheelwright. It was a wooden leg, which had been made for a cow, and which the animal had worn for several years, until she met her death by lightning.

It was a curious contrivance made of two pieces of wood, jointed at the knee with a pair of ordinary iron hinges, and made to fly out straight when the animal arose from a recumbent position, by means of thick india-rubber springs attached from the upper to the lower timbers.

If the powerfully-built little carpenter opened his eyes wide at what he was pleased to call "that thayer cur'us contraption," he did so even more fully when I asked him to allow me to send him to sleep by a

peculiar power I possessed, and I quite believe he thought I was either insane, bent on robbing him, or else thirsting for his blood.

I had, therefore, to fully explain the meaning of hypnotism to Billy, who, although a masterful hand with the adze or chisel, had apparently no brain for other subjects. His head was full of chips and timber, and nothing more. By dint of persevering persuasion, he was at length prevailed upon to permit me to place him in a state of trance, but not until I had first placed my faithful collie "Skybo" in a mesmeric sleep; at the sight of which Billy laughed loudly enough to make the plates and crockery in my house on wheels rattle again.

I had no need to ask Billy to give up his mind, and allow himself to think of just nothing at all, for it appeared a chronic state with him, to which he relapsed after every laugh. When he did enter the trance state he related the following very curious adventure of his early days.

A STRANGE RESURRECTION.

I AM not what you may term an *old* man, being a few months short of sixty-five years, but though my years are totalling up considerably, my spirits are light as a feather, and although fifty years have passed away since the story I am about to tell you took place, the incidents are as vivid in my memory as they were a month after their occurrence.

I was a youngster of fourteen or fifteen at the time I am about to speak, and like most boys of that age

had a liking for the sea, especially as I dwelt in a great seaport where every one was in some way or other connected with fish or ships, and where even the school-boys' common expressions were flavoured with nautical terms.

My birthplace was Great Yarmouth, and at the time I left school in 1835, no one seemed to ask the question, which we so frequently hear now, of "What are you going to do with your son?" because it seemed predestined that the entrance of a boy into the world should be by way of the high seas. Each boy at the age of fourteen or fifteen appeared to look forward intuitively to the time when he should make his first voyage, or join one of the great herring fleets which annually leave Yarmouth in August; and he knew also that his maiden experience was merely a test, to ascertain for what particular division of toilsome nautical life he was most fitted.

Some liked the sea and its thrilling dangers, and stuck to it through fair weather and foul, working their way upward, till in a very few years they became mate, skipper, and presently part-owner of the smack or lugger they commanded. Others preferred shore life; the sea was too coy a mistress for them to woo; and they were accordingly apprenticed to sail or mast-makers, shipwrights, smiths, netmakers, or something of the kind connected with shipping. Others again would volunteer for service in Her Majesty's Navy, being taken with the trim appearance of the young fellows who had preceded them in that branch of the nautical life, and came home on leave, to show off their little horde of gold saved from their first cruise money.

Yet another set there were who, disdaining the toil of

a fisher's life, the subordination of the navy, or of being always ashore at some trade, chose the freer life which was led by those who were apprenticed to the coasting or mercantile trade.

On leaving school I determined to see about me a little, and accordingly cast in my lot with the latter group, and was in due course enrolled as an apprentice on the books of *The Ladybird*, a smart little trading brig, belonging to Yarmouth.

My father at the time kept an inn called the "Jolly Waggoner," just out of the town, on the Caister Road, and as it was early spring, the various caravans were moving from their winter quarters, and their owners painting and gilding up their properties ready for the round of the fairs, which in Norfolk commence in the spring and run right through the months, till Christmas and heavy snows put a stop to them for the year.

At the side of the "Jolly Waggoner" was a large piece of spare ground, upon which might frequently be seen four or five caravans being repaired and painted; my father uniting in his own person the businesses of painter, publican, carpenter, and smith; so that with one thing and another he made a very fair living in a quiet way.

Well, a couple of days before *The Ladybird* was to sail with a general cargo to the Faroe Isles, the skipper, towards evening, came down to my father's house to settle about my premium money, and to give me an opportunity of signing my indentures.

Captain Cooper, that was his name, was a jolly, genial man, full of fun and merriment, and had the name for being a most able seaman; and as he was part owner

of the vessel, my father had no doubt that I should be in good and safe hands. They were old schoolmates and life-long friends, so, as Captain Cooper remarked, it would only be leaving one father on shore to serve under another at sea—a kind of nautical foster-father.

I was delighted when the indenture was pushed across the table to receive my signature, and though I made a big blot to start with, I afterwards signed my name very well, which was more than I could say for either of my two fathers, for their hands were so stiff, and the pen so scratchy, that they made very laborious work of it. The captain wrote his name as much with his jaws as with his pen, for sticking his tongue into his cheek, he elongated and rolled his lower jaw in a most curious manner, apparently forming each letter with the tip of his tongue on the inside of his cheek, and then simultaneously scrawling in the same slow manner with the quill pen on the parchment before him.

My father signed with a big cross, so his task was soon over, but still not before he had made the pen give a big splutter, just as a sea-rocket does when it touches the water, and the ink flew in spray from bottom to top of the important document.

By the time the witnesses had signed their names, and spattered their share of ink over the indenture, the whole thing was highly decorated, and looked for all the world like a map of some large city, showing by black dots the positions of the various places of interest.

After such a Herculean task, much refreshment was required, supplied, and in due course consumed.

I can fancy myself now sitting in the cosy bar-parlour—though it is fifty years ago—listening to the wonderful yarns spun by Captain Cooper ; yarns which appeared

to me to become more astounding as he warmed up with the many and various liquids he imbibed.

Then I recollect a startling occurrence which happened in the midst of the story-telling ; it was the entrance of a travelling showman, who wished to know if he could put up at our house for the night, as he wanted some repairs done to his caravan next day. He was of medium height, stoutish and florid, just the type of person one would expect to be connected with the show business. He was a perfect stranger to my father, but as there was work to be done for him in the morning, my father bade him take his caravan upon the green, and after he and the ostler had fixed up all for the night, come and have a comfortable pipe and chat with us.

Jim, our ostler, accompanied the showman, and having stabled the horse for the night, and put the van into a good berth, the showman rejoined us. He proved to be a capital story-teller, as are most of his profession. His tales, if anything, were more wonderful than Captain Cooper's ; any way, I never heard such stories as they told one against the other, and I do not doubt that if I had glanced at myself in the looking-glass, my eyes would have resembled small china tea-saucers. My father did not call them stories, he used a harsher but shorter word ; but I, in my verdancy, imagining they *might* be true, gave them the benefit of the doubt, and swallowed them like so many sugar-plums.

Now the thing that fixes this scene so vividly on my memory was, that while these men were so busy racking their brains for the toughest yarns, the half-door leading into the bar was suddenly opened, and the space filled with the huge form of a man, who inquired, in no amiable

strain, if the showman were going to sit there all night, and leave him without so much as a quart to moisten his lips with.

The ceiling of the bar parlour was certainly not lofty, being barely seven feet from the floor, but to my surprise, and I might also add horror, when the man pushed open the half-door and entered the room he could not stand upright, so gigantic was his stature. His entrance created quite a commotion among those present, but the showman soon smoothed matters by ordering a gallon of ale, and telling us that our visitor was a giant with whom he was travelling round the country for exhibition purposes.

I had never seen a giant before, and he quite frightened me when he planted himself right beside me on the settle. I rose to find fresh quarters, not quite so close to such an uncanny monster, but he pulled me back and sat me on his knee, just as if I had been a four-year-old child, instead of a good-sized lad of fifteen.

His hands and feet were enormous, and when I shook hands with him at his request, my decent-sized fist looked like a baby's in his huge paw. He was not only tall, but he was large-framed, and well built in every way ; a man of enormous strength, and, as I soon found, of prodigious appetite. He had, so the showman informed us, just been captured from the plough in Yorkshire, and the showman was taking him round, and paying him double as much as he could earn by his work as an agricultural labourer. The giant liked the nomadic life, and the princely sum of eighteen shillings a week made him something of a Cræsus compared with other working men.

Somehow I could not take to the man, although he

seemed to show a great partiality for me ; he was rough, coarse of speech, and of a pugnacious temperament ; but, except for one or two little bickerings, a very pleasant evening was spent, and the showman, who was in his cups, insisted upon seeing Captain Cooper back to the ship, as the Captain could not steer straight ; in fact, he could scarce make headway at all, as his legs would cross and keep tripping him up. The end of it was that the showman's horse was brought out, the Captain strapped on his back, and the showman hoisted up behind, to navigate the steed to the quay. Jim the ostler followed quietly behind on foot, and returned an hour later with the horse, informing my father that he had left both skipper and showman fast asleep on the cabin floor.

Then we went to bed, and saw no more of the tipsy showman till ten o'clock next morning, when he turned up at the "Jolly Waggoner" looking very seedy.

Well, now having introduced my *dramatis personæ*, I must say a few words concerning the ship, the lively little *Ladybird*. She was a trim little oak-built brig of some 200 tons, well found in gear and stores, and carried beside the skipper, a mate, three hands, and a cook, to which please add your humble servant as articulated apprentice. Our cargo was a very miscellaneous one, and consisted principally of barrelled beef and pork, cloth, linen, beer, spirits, hardware and cutlery, for we were bound on a trading expedition to the Faroe Islands, where we were to take in a cargo of salt-fish, bird-skins, fur, guano, seal-skins, oil, etc., in exchange for the goods we were taking out, as very little ready money is in circulation in those out-of-the-way isles.

The skipper did not expect to be gone more than two

months, as the distance from Yarmouth to the Faroes is not more than a thousand miles, inclusive of touching at the Orkneys and Shetland *en route*; so when I bade my father farewell on the quay, I anticipated being back for my birthday on the 10th of June, but my case was only one more exemplification of the adage, "Man proposes, but God disposes," as will be seen.

I was in a great flutter of excitement when the hour of departure really *did* arrive, which was not till near noon instead of eight sharp, as the skipper had announced. I was like a monkey just escaped from its cage, here, there, and everywhere; and when we dropped down the river to the harbour's mouth, on the very last of the ebb, I can recollect how I scrambled aloft when the order was given to loosen and hoist sail. I did not know what to do certainly, but I watched the others, and worked away till my fingers, arms, aye and every limb ached again—but I was supremely happy until *mal-de-mer* overtook me, and then I went below and turned into my berth.

A couple of days found me all alive again, and on deck as merry as a cricket. We were now off Aberdeen, quietly drawing along under all sail, and everything going as merry as a marriage bell.

As night began to close in around us we had Peterhead (the chief whaling port) right on our port beam, and that gave Captain Cooper an opportunity to tell some of his yarns about the whaling cruises he had participated in when a young man in the Greenland seas.

After dark, being past Kinnard's Head, near Frazerburgh, we had the great gulf between Aberdeenshire and Caithness on our port beam, and were quite out of sight of land. The wind, which had been lazy all the day, now began to freshen and back a little to the south of

west, which was very favourable for our sailing. Seeing this the captain made up his mind not to call in at Kirkwall, the chief town in the Orkneys, but to leave it for the homeward voyage, and take advantage of the favouring breeze to push on to Lerwick in the Shetland Isles. His orders before turning in were consequently given to the mate to be carried out, unless a change of wind should occur, in which case the skipper was to be called.

Having got over my sea-sickness and found my sea-legs, the day appeared too short for me, so I agreed with the cabin-boy, Joey Nicholls, that we would not turn in till the end of the first watch (midnight), but stay on deck and enjoy the beautiful evening, for it was a lovely mild moonlight night. My own watch was the second dog-watch, which is over at eight p.m., so Joey and I had laid ourselves out for a further four hours' fun before turning in.

For a long time we chatted with old Bunks, whose turn at the wheel it was, and then getting tired of him, we took off our shoes and skylarked about in the beautiful moonlight. We set each other various tricks to perform, at which we found we were about equal ; but presently Joey, whose turn it was to set the next task, ascended to the mizzen cross-trees, and sat there for two or three minutes, when he came down and dared me to do the same feat. It was a simple task enough, but it must be remembered I had only had two or three days on the sea, and had hardly overcome my nervousness in going aloft even in the daytime, and to ascend at night when the moon throws such black shadows from the sails, was quite trial enough for me.

However, I essayed it, and arrived safely at the cross-

trees, upon which I perched myself in a very gingerly manner, for fear (in my ignorance) that my weight might cause them to break. I sat and looked upon the heaving waters around, and was endeavouring to summon courage to look on deck from my dizzy height, when I heard a thud and a cry of pain below me, and involuntarily glancing down, I saw the mate strike Bunks, who was hanging to the spokes of the wheel. As I looked another blow descended, and then breaking the unfortunate man's hold from the spokes, I saw the mate deliberately pitch him over the taffrail into the white wake of the *Ladybird*, where he seemed to float a minute and then disappear.

Almost simultaneously I saw a strange man seize poor Joey, struggle with him to the bulwarks and throw him overboard. Joey could swim, and I could hear his shrieks for several minutes, as he vainly struck out after the brig, which was making three feet to his one.

I could not recognize the assailant of my poor chum ; but when I looked under the foot of one of the sails, I beheld, to my horror, the herculean form of the giant I had left a few days before at my father's inn, the "Jolly Waggoner." I could scarcely believe my eyes, but a form like the one beneath me on the deck was such as one sees scarcely in a lifetime, and when once seen cannot readily be forgotten.

My heart beat quickly, and I trembled so violently that I could with difficulty retain my hold of the ropes to prevent myself from falling to the deck. I could not keep my eyes off the figures beneath me, and in the bright moonlight could detect their every movement. I saw the showman go to the wheel and pull his coat-collar up and his cap-peak down, and the giant

hide himself behind the cook's galley, which stood amidships.

Then the mate went to the fo'castle scuttle and bawled out, "All hands tumble up, man overboard; shorten sail—be alive there—don't stop to shave," and the usual patter for suddenly turning up a crew, and in a twinkling up came the three men from their berths, rubbing the sleep out of their eyes with their knuckles.

"Here, lads," said the mate, pointing to the boat which was hanging from the davits, "jump in and lower away. Old Bunks is in the water astern. Look alive now!"

They stepped up to the boat and began to right side her, when out from his lurking-place behind the galley sprang the giant, and in a trice, with a heavy cudgel, he knocked the three poor fellows down like ninepins, and before they could recover, picked them up one by one like bags of chaff, and tossed them over the bulwarks into the silent sea.

At this sight my senses nearly forsook me; but clasping the mizzen top-mast convulsively I hung on, cogitating what to do, and deciding that if either of the three fiends below should attempt to ascend the shrouds to take me, I would save them the commission of another murder by precipitating myself on the hard deck below, thus hoping to kill myself instantaneously.

They descended into the fo'castle, looked into the cook's galley and under the boat to try and discover me, and I heard them mention my name several times, coupled with most awful threats and voluble profanity. They did not appear to think of looking aloft for me; but as I pressed my body to the mast I was afraid, so great was my agitation, and knowing wood to be

such a splendid conductor of sound, that they might hear the violent throbbing of my heart as they passed the foot of the mast. It was a foolish idea, but at the time I quite believed it beat with noise enough to betray me.

After another search the mate, with an oath, exclaimed, "Leave the — till the morning; we can scrag him then just as well as now. Come below, lads, and have a drink, for I think we've finished our job in a very neat fashion!"

They all went down into the little cabin, which contained two berths, one for the captain and the other for the dastardly mate. The skylight being a little open I could hear them talking, but could not distinguish what they said; and I could also hear the clinking of glasses and the drawing of corks.

But what of Captain Cooper? So far I had neither heard nor seen him. Was he dead, or what had become of him?

I had no means of ascertaining.

How long I sat on the cross-trees I could not say, but presently the voices in the cabin grew less noisy, and at length ceased altogether. Whereupon I imagined that the ruffians had drunk so much that they had fallen asleep. I listened for some time longer, and at length, as all was quiet, and I was getting numb with sitting so long in one position, I quietly quitted my eyrie, and with trembling steps descended to the deck, and peeped through the small aperture left for ventilation at the edge of the cabin skylight. Although I could hear voices I could perceive no one in the cabin; however, I noticed one thing which surprised me—that a small trap-door in the cabin-floor stood slightly

raised, and from the space beneath came rays of light, showing that the conspirators were doing something in the hold. Now I thought, if I could only steal down the companion, I could not only look round the cabin for some signs of the captain, but I might also get a glimpse beneath the trap-door and see what was going on below. I doubted my courage, but not for long, as it occurred to me that the captain, after all, might not be dead ; and in the fact of his being still alive laid my only chance of escape.

I felt my way cautiously down the dark stairway, and peered down the partly-open trap-door. I could see the three villains on their knees sorting over papers, which might have been one-pound bank-notes by their size, and the care with which they were being counted out. In front of the giant stood a large leathern bag, with its mouth wide open, displaying bright golden guineas in great numbers ; evidently the gang were dividing the spoil. The place in which they were now gloating over their crime-bought wealth appeared to be only about six feet square, and to contain nothing but some large iron-bound chests, the contents of which I could not even guess at, but I should say that the place had been used as a kind of strong-room, and the only mode of ingress and egress was evidently the trap-door through which I was now looking.

But what of the captain ?

Carefully, in the total darkness, I felt my way to his bunk, and put my hand in. Yes, he was there, for I touched him. It was his leg I touched. I slid my hand up towards his head, and my fingers rested upon his cheek. It was warm, but, alas ! there was a feeling about the flesh that told me he was dead !

At the awful discovery I could scarcely repress a wild, hysterical shriek—a shriek which would have cost me my life, for the assassins below would instantly have sprung up and murdered me with as little compunction as they would kill a fowl or a rabbit.

I clutched the side of the bunk for support ; I could scarcely breathe ! I staggered ; and stumbling, kicked against something which fell and sounded like a knife. It made a noise on the cabin floor, and I heard a voice say with an oath, "What's that?" Then I saw the light move and the shadows of the men sway about.

They were coming up into the cabin ! I was lost !!

Stay ; was there not time to reach the companion and fly on deck ?

No.

My faintness vanished instantly, being put to flight by the new and greater horror which presented itself. The discovery of the captain's death had unhinged me, but the approach of my own death braced my nerves and spurred my limbs into immediate action ; for without an instant's hesitation I sprang into the dead man's berth and hid behind the corpse, placing myself between the dead skipper and the side of the vessel. The head and shoulders of the giant came upward through the trap, but it was too dark for him to discern anything. Oh, for a pistol ! I could then have defied the villains, who would have been caught like rats in a trap of their own setting.

The head suddenly disappeared, but presently made its reappearance, and the lantern was handed from below and stood on the cabin floor, while I in my hiding-place quaked with fear, imagining that I should now for a certainty be discovered and slaughtered.

Here was a contrast to the cosy bar-parlour of the "Jolly Waggoner"; but I could give but little thought even to my dear old dad, knowing that my life hung on a mere thread. My eyes were riveted on the gigantic head and shoulders emerging from the floor. The lantern came first through the trap, and was swung aloft by the brawny arm of the giant, who looked around beneath it. He gazed steadfastly at the face of the dead man by my side to see if any movement was apparent. The dead man hid and saved me, for the giant quietly pronounced one word, "Rats!" and then he and the lantern vanished below again.

Here was a dilemma for me to be in! What should I do?

To lie where I was simply meant being discovered in a very short time. What *could* I do?

If I attempted to get in the boat and lower myself down from the davits I should be heard. Could I feel for the knife on the floor and stab the rascals one by one as they ascended the ladder into the cabin?

Bah! my very heart recoiled at the notion. I could not have killed them even to save my own life. I thought of the sensation of feeling the knife drive through the flesh and jar upon the bones, and the spurt of warm life-blood over my hand, and I shuddered at the idea. No, I was no coward, but as a lad of fifteen I could not take a human life, even for the sake of saving my own. With a pistol it might have been different, a touch of the trigger and all would have been over; but to stab and stab again—no, I could not do it.

But stay, a bright idea struck me. Surely the trap-door had a bolt or bolts!

Out of the berth I immediately crept, over the silent form of the man who in death had saved my life, and stole on tip-toe to the trap-door. The villains below were jangling over the doling, and their noisy altercation served to hide any little noise I made searching my way across the cabin, which was in utter darkness.

Joy ! there were two bolts !

I carefully felt the bolts to ascertain if they worked easily, and with my fingers examined the staples to see if they were clear and strong.

Yes, both were clear and in order. Then noiselessly and tremblingly I lowered the lid and shot the bolts, and so expeditiously and quietly was it done that had there been even less noise below, it is probable that the men would scarcely have known the moment of their trapping, though they would soon perceive the fact from the air becoming hot and vitiated.

Groping about I soon found the knife on the cabin floor, and sprang on deck, noticing that the night had grown much darker, and sombre clouds hid the moon ; still there was plenty of light for me to see to lower the boat. But now another fact arrested my attention, a startling fact : there was smoke quietly curling up from the fo'castle. I rushed to the hatch, but, looking down, could see nothing for the dense smoke ; on listening intently, however, I heard a faint crackling sound as of burning wood.

The ship was on fire !

Should I release the prisoners ?

No, that would never do, my life would be forfeited to my humanity without a doubt. Probably they would break out of the strong room long before the fire reached so far aft, and although I had the only boat, they would

probably have sufficient time to rig up some kind of raft, upon which they could remain safely till they were picked up and taken into port by a passing trading vessel.

I could imagine them being hanged at Newgate on my evidence!

Keeping my eyes on the companion way, I popped into the galley, and fished a huge junk of salt beef out of the boiler in which I had seen the cook place it the night before, for the purpose of soaking it to remove some of the super-abundant salt with which it was saturated. A bucket of doubtfully clean water stood in a corner; I tasted it, and found it was fresh, poured it into a large stone bottle, spilling half of it in my hurry, rammed a dirty cloth into the neck by way of cork, and put bottle and beef into the boat.

I hastened to lower the jolly-boat from the davits, but before she touched the water one of the falls jammed, the forward one luckily, and, as I lowered away on the aft one, the stern rested in the water, while the bows remained a couple of feet above it, in a dangerous position. This is not at all an uncommon occurrence, but my nerves were so shaken by the terrible ordeal I had passed through, that I fancied I heard the noise of feet on deck, so seizing my knife I cut away like a madman, making a dozen random cuts where one well-directed one would have sufficed. The boat swung round before I could unhook the other fall, and I was within an ace of meeting a watery grave when she righted, and bumped against the brig's black side.

From the taffrail, as I swept past, depended a thin line, which I mechanically clutched and held, but as the ship was going some three knots an hour the boat

rapidly dropped astern. I still held on as fathom after fathom paid out over the taffrail, till quite twenty fathoms hung in the water; then came a jerk, which threw me on my face, but I still hung on, and made the end fast round the forward thwart, as the other end was evidently fast on the *Ladybird*.

I sat in the bows for what seemed like hours, knife in hand, ready to cut myself adrift on the first signs of a human being appearing on deck. I saw the moon set and the night grow inky dark, and the volume of smoke from the fo'castle increase, and then I saw the glow of the extending fire reflected on the sails, but no human form was visible. Then I heard a crash and a subdued roar, and saw tongues of flame shoot up above the deck, catching the foresail and setting it in a blaze; then up and up it mounted till the whole suite of sails on the foremast were ablaze, and as I sat there I remember thinking to myself how pretty it looked. I felt secure, and my nerves were soothed by the sight before me, and I looked on calmly from my seat in the bows at the gallant ship, which from being my home had nearly become my tomb. Could I but have looked at the men in the strong room, then, come what might, I am afraid I must have released them, for evidently they were still prisoners, and my sympathetic heart would have been my body's ruin. I tried to find some mode for their release and my own safety, but although I racked my brain, I could devise no practical plan; beside, by this time they were probably suffocated.

While thus cogitating, the flames took hold upon the sails of the mizzen-mast, and they too were soon destroyed, leaving the yards and masts blazing. The

air grew hotter and hotter ; the deck was in a blaze, and great pieces of burning wood and tarry rope began to fall in and around the boat, and although I wished to hang on to witness the last of the *Ladybird*, I was at last compelled to cut the rope and drop quietly astern, as the heat, smoke, and fiery drift had become quite unbearable.

The good ship was now alight from stem to stern, and without her sails made very little progress through the water, but drifted gradually before the faint breeze, so slowly, in fact, that with the paddles I could manage to keep up with her. She presented a splendid appearance as, clothed in fire, she rose and fell on the roll of the sea ; her reflection, mirrored in the waves, made the water glow with an incandescent lustre that riveted my boyish attention as intently as the finest pyrotechnic display could possibly have done.

Day at last began to dawn, and when light fairly broke, I was alone on the ocean ; for the poor old hull with its stumpy black masts swerved from side to side, and, with a sidelong movement, sank like a tea-saucer, sending up, with a sudden puff, a great cloud of vapour, and leaving many charred fragments floating in the swirling waters where she disappeared. I pulled in all directions, to see if perchance the bodies of any of the villainous trio might float to the surface, but nothing met my eyes but broken and burnt wood, and the usual flotsam from a scuttled vessel.

And that was the last I ever saw of the good ship *Ladybird*.

Now that should really be the end of my yarn, for I am not going to tell you how I drifted about for three days, wet to the skin, and unable to protect

myself from the pouring rain ; and I need not tell you how I cut my raw salt beef in strips and washed it down with the dirty water I had in the bottle. Suffice it to say that on the evening of the third day I was picked up, more dead than alive, by a brig bound to Rekiavick, in Iceland ; and from thence was given a passage to Hull, from which port I walked home to Yarmouth.

When I quietly entered the bar of the "Jolly Waggoner," I nearly frightened my father out of his senses at my unexpected appearance.

But to tell of that would make my yarn too long.

What I want to wind up with is the proof of its truth ; and this is how I vouch for its accuracy, by quoting the following extract, taken from the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* (London).

Look up that newspaper for Monday, January 15th, 1894, and on page 3, near the bottom of the 6th column, you will find this paragraph :—

"A STRANGE DISCOVERY.—A Plymouth correspondent telegraphs that advices have been received of the arrival in Galveston of the Norwegian barque *Elsa Anderson*, having in tow the hull of an English-built brig, which had apparently been burned at sea more than fifty years ago, and which appeared on the surface of the ocean after a submarine disturbance off the Faroe Islands. The hull of the strange derelict was covered with sea-shells, but the hold and under decks contained very little water. In the captain's cabin were found several iron-bound chests, the contents of which had been reduced to pulp except a leather bag, which required an axe to open it. In it were guineas bearing date 1809, and worth over £1000.

There were also several watches and a stomacher of pearls blackened and rendered valueless by the action of the water. Three skeletons were also found, one of a man about seven feet high."

There, that is my yarn, and I may just add that my first experience of the sea was my last, for my maiden voyage contained enough excitement during its very brief duration to last for the term of my natural life.

"What do you ask? How came the pearl stomacher and the watches in the hands of the miscreants?"

Well, that I must leave, for I did not see them in their possession, but doubtless they were the proceeds of robberies ashore.

IV.

INTRODUCTION TO "A VISITOR FROM MARS."

THE narrator of the following quaint story was a little man, very soberly dressed, and very timid in his demeanour. He appeared to be greatly in awe of his wife, of whom he spoke with due, or perhaps I might say undue, humility and deference. If his habiliments were sober, I am much afraid his habits were the reverse; his nose was very rubicund, and its bright colouring contrasted oddly with his coat, once black, but now tinged with a disreputable greenish hue.

He sat in an awkward position on the very edge of the seat, acquiesced in everything I said, and was of such a feeble, backboneless character, that after he had consumed half a tumbler of whiskey at a gulp, I had no trouble in hypnotizing him (without even asking his consent) as he lolled back on the chair in a very drowsy condition.

Slight hope was mine of eliciting anything like a story from this intemperate little gentleman, and it was an agreeable surprise, therefore, when he reeled off the following, which I will call "A Visitor from Mars."

A VISITOR FROM MARS.

THAT a spirit could visit this earth from such a distant planet as Mars, my wife would not believe for a moment, explain it how I would.

She required a proof, and proof I could have given her had she only attended to her household duties and kept my pockets in proper repair, instead of prying into things that did not concern her ; beside, was not the verbal description of my shadowy visitor and his extraordinary conversation sufficient to convince any one but an obstinate woman that what I spoke was solid truth ?

Why should she imagine that the inordinately hot weather of the past summer had had such a soporific effect upon me, that, in wooing Morpheus, I simply *dreamed* of my visitor ?

Why should she think that because I had my spirit flask with me during my afternoon ramble that I—— ?— but allow me, my intelligent reader, to lay my story before *you*, and I think you will bear me out that there is a foundation in it.

To begin at the beginning.

It was a hot, dreamy day in the middle of August, and I was staying at the old-fashioned, out-of-the-world, under-the-hill town of Minehead in Somersetshire. The atmosphere being too hot for sitting indoors, and the water much too clear for fishing, I thought I would take a stroll to Horner Woods, which lie under the great hills, just this side of Stoke Pero, and in the immediate neighbourhood of Dunkery Beacon, which is precisely one-third of a mile high.

Opening my umbrella and using it as a sunshade, I

wandered listlessly along the two or three miles which intervene between Minehead and my haunt, and took a long time in reaching the recumbent tree upon which I loved to sit and sketch or read. A more charming or solitary spot cannot be found in all the West Country.

The walk leads up a narrow valley, skirted on either side by hills rising abruptly to a height of many hundred feet, culminating in the giant Dunkery Beacon, whose bald head, as I have said, breaks the horizon seventeen hundred feet above sea level. The feet of these giant hills are clad in trees and underwood of such an impenetrable nature, that as one walks in the valley and looks up the acclivities, one can see but a few score yards, and then the mass of wood and foliage becomes so black and dense that the eye cannot penetrate it.

Of course, as in all western valleys, a bubbling, murmuring trout stream flows through it towards the sea, into which it falls at the pretty village of Porlock, some miles distant; and as it twists and falls from and among the great boulders with which the bed of the stream is thickly strewn, it is easy to fancy one hears persons conversing at no great distance, so peculiar is the murmuring noise of the waters. Perhaps the water has its familiar spirits! Why not? We know that spirits and water are frequently very intimate with each other, and produce much talk and idle chatter, and possibly they are spirit voices that we hear, although we cannot make much sense of them.

It was a fairy spot I had selected, and as I sat on my comfortable seat on the mossy old fallen monarch of the woods, with my back resting comfortably against a bough, which gave it the support of an arm-chair, I

could not help imagining that such a spot would just have suited Robin Hood and his merry men. In fact, I amused myself by peopling the glade in my imagination.

There—under that great branching oak might rest several mighty casks of ale, round which the men in Lincoln green would cluster, lying in various picturesque attitudes, with their bows and arrows hanging from the branches of surrounding trees, ready to be snatched down at a moment's notice in case of any alarm. There—where that patch of yellow-green grass crept out from the withered oak, I would have a party of dancers tripping it to pipe and tabour; and down yonder precipitous path should come the lofty Little John, with a fine deer across his broad shoulders; while in the arbour formed by those three hawthorn trees, I could imagine the sturdy form and graceful figure of Robin himself and the fair Maid Marian. Then Friar Tuck must be among them; yes, he should have a large horn of ale and——thud!!

“Why, where in the name of fortune came you from?” I cried, as a little fat man in cassock and hood plumped down on the soft turf beside me. “Have I the pleasure of addressing his reverence, Friar Tuck?”

“Friar Tuck! No, my friend—never heard of that gentleman. *My* name is Friar Bacon.”

“Friar Bacon!” I exclaimed. “Why, surely *you* never had anything to do with this jovial company—Robin Hood and his merry men?”

But as I swept my arm round to give emphasis to my speech, I perceived, to my astonishment, that nought but trees and rocks met my view on every side, my



"Just place your hand upon my breast."—p. 91.

foresters had vanished, and I found myself in the presence of a short, stout, rubicund monk, who should have been dust these six hundred years.

"Bacon," I murmured, looking doubtingly at my visitor; "why, how is it possible that you, who died, if my memory serves me rightly, ere the close of the thirteenth century, can be here before me at the end of the nineteenth? You are joking with me, my friend."

"Oh no," replied my visitor, "it is extremely simple. You must know that I, with many other learned men, have formed a scientific colony, so to speak, in the planet Mars. We have many among us known to you by repute. St. Dunstan, Newton, Archimedes, Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo, Euclid, and many others, are of our company, and right harmoniously we live together. Live, I say, but of course you will understand I mean exist, for we have for many ages passed from the flesh, and are now simply etherealized bodies, or, if you will, spirits!

"You would ask how came we in Mars?"

"Well, let it suffice if I inform you, that by the sanction of the Great Spirit, we, Advancers of Mankind, are allowed a special parole, as a recompense for our toil on earth, and there in Mars we exist, instead of perambulating this dense earth of yours, in a spirit form, till we are required 'At the Last.'

"Just place your hand upon my breast."

I did so, but my fingers meeting no resistance, I extended my arm, and could see my hand emerge beyond the figure as the jolly friar remarked:

"There, you see, I am pure spirit, double distilled, and I trust highly rectified.

"Well," he continued, "I have not long to stay, so I will have a short chat with you, and then, heigh presto! back to my cosy planet. You see it is only once in two years we get very close to your earth, that is, at a certain time we are only 35 millions of miles from you, whilst at another time we are as much as 244 millions of miles away. Therefore as we travel fast I must not linger long, or I shall be late at our monthly scientific meeting, which takes place to-morrow."

I could not refrain from asking him what the planet Mars was like, and he very civilly informed me that it was prettier than the earth, and its climate milder; "beside which," said he—

"The genial seasons are longer; we have a spring of 192 days, and a summer of 180; whilst the autumn is of 150, and the winter of 147 days' duration only. A longish year, as you will observe, nearly 690 days; but then we are so busy and so happy that we do not notice the flight of time. Time is an object to you mortals, but we philosophers totally disregard it. If you visited our planet you would find one thing in particular very trying to you in your present gross form—we have no atmosphere to speak of.

"We neither eat, drink, nor sleep; require no clothing, that is no *renewal* of clothing, for this cassock is the shade of the last costume I wore when on earth, and will probably last me till the Crack of Doom; consequently we are enabled to employ the whole of our time in scientific research."

"Might I venture to inquire into the nature of your scientific studies?" I timidly inquired.

"Why certainly," he replied, rubbing his forehead reflectively; and as he drew his hand across the noble

expanse of his frontal bone, I could see a rush of little sparks follow his shadowy fingers. This set me to gaze more intently at his phenomenal person, and as I did so I was surprised to find that I could see quite through what should have been the frontal bone, and there, in the cavity of the cranium, I beheld his brain at work thinking. It simply appeared like revolving smoke curling this way and that, and taking fantastic forms; halting, and then moving on again in complex but orderly movement.

Seeing my utter astonishment, he good-naturedly enlightened me as to the strange appearance.

"The brain," said he, "is *the man*, it never dies, and in our case is the only part which does not entirely become spirit, that is, *transparent* spirit. It always remains a foggy, cloudy kind of ether, visible to mortals; and they are constantly walking through and sitting surrounded by it, though they know it not.

"You probably do not believe in ghosts or spirits, yet you are surrounded by them day and night, and when, by a variety of accidental causes, one becomes materialized you see it, and immediately write off to a newspaper about it as something wonderful. Ha! ha! If I could only open your eyes and show you the number of ghosts in this silent and solitary spot you would scarcely believe your eyes; there are thousands!"

Then looking at me with his peculiar, luminous eyes he inquired, "Did you ever notice a kind of mist floating over graveyards during certain days of damp, muggy weather?"

"Yes," I replied, "often; but what of that?"

"What of that!—why," continued Bacon, "that is the spirit, the soul, *the brain* of disembodied mortals, which

floats till the Final Day just above the ground, the rock, the sea, or wherever the body was buried."

I marvelled at this, whereupon my communicative friend went further, and said :—

"Do you not know that these spirits may be conversed with by mortals? You have a certain control over electricity, you have the phonograph, the electrophone, and the telephone—trifles in comparison to what we have invented in Mars—but with these you have only to proceed in this way. You simply——"

But ere he uttered another word a wind swept through the wood with a crackling sound, at which the Friar bowed his head and quietly uttered the words "I obey!" It was evident by his uneasy movements and facial expression that he had been stayed from enlightening me further by some unseen spirits, so, to turn the subject, I said :—

"What is there appertaining to this earth in which we might advance our knowledge, by invention or otherwise?"

The little monk looked at me with a mirthful face, putting his jolly head on one side, and with a look in his eyes as if he would say, "Don't you wish you may pump me?" said :—

"I must tell you plainly, that by our bond we are forbidden to tell to mortals the secrets we possess, but I will just give you a little idea or two that you may experimentalize upon, and see what you are clever enough to make of notions that *we* have already established as practical scientific facts.

"Electricity with you is only in its infancy, it is but just born—yet you have taken several steps in the right direction ; you have the phonograph, the electrophone,

and the telephone, all of which are very well in their way, but you must go further with them. If you are clever enough you can make the phonograph convey *thought* as well as speech, so that you and I, being a mile apart, could, with the help of an improved phonograph, convey our *thoughts* to each other. With a certain instrument conversation with departed spirits might be held and the very secrets of the grave revealed, and the great ——” But here the wind again sighed through the valley, and the monk again bowed and meekly crossed himself, having evidently ventured too far beyond the bounds of his suggestions.

“The electrophone,” said he, “may easily be improved, so that in combination with a certain machine which I may tell you is *on the eve of being invented* in America, will not only give you the voice of the person speaking at a distance, but also his or her likeness with every line of the features expressing the individuality of the person under notice.

“Electricians of the Nineteenth Century! why, you have only reached ‘A’ in the alphabet of electrical possibilities. How absurd of you to use horseflesh to draw loads, and raise or lower heavy masses, and to use steam—noisy, bulky steam—for locomotives and marine engines, and to write with ink and even use hand-power to sew with, when everything could be done quicker, easier, cheaper, and cleaner by the *touchstone of all future motion*—electricity!

“There, get along, ye mortals of to-day!” and the little man rolled about with laughter, “ye laggards, why, if half-a-dozen of our company in Mars had had *your* scientific instruments and delicate machinery in *our* day we should have made an entirely different world of

this earth. Why, my old friend Archimedes would have obtained a fulcrum for his lever long before now, and if no one had prevented him would have attempted to hurl the earth right out of the planetary system into space. Oh, he is even now a most mischievous fellow, though you would not think it to look at him; his ambition is boundless, and his scientific pranks are at times very reprehensible. Only last week, just for the fun of the thing, he blew Sir Isaac Newton nearly to the sun, and when the poor fellow returned to Mars after several days' absence we scarcely knew him, he had become so sunburnt with his visit to the suburbs of the great luminary. It was beyond a joke, you know." Then the little man went off into another paroxysm of laughter at the thought of poor Sir Isaac's burnt spirit-face.

"What," queried I, "can you tell me of ships and navigation? Have we reached the limit of speed in the merchant service, and the zenith of offensive and defensive power in the Navy?"

These questions sent the little man off into a fresh fit of laughter, and he looked at me as much as to say, "You ignoramus, you type of mortal feebleness and conceit." Presently having calmed down he proceeded:—

"I must tell you that Nelson is with us in spirit, and has turned out a capital inventor. He follows eagerly all that takes place, navally, in the little dots on the globe called Great Britain, and you will scarcely believe it when I tell you, that he has invented a *wooden* ship that would in one brief hour destroy your entire navy."

"How could it be done?" said I.

"Ah! there you are! I cannot *tell* you, I can only give you an idea. My lord's ship is of wood, compressed

india-rubber, and cork ! The only thing you have to discover is how to place your caoutchouc so that when a shot is fired at your ship it passes clean through it and the hole immediately closes, just as the water closes after it is cloven by the ship's hull. Firing at Nelson's ship would have the same effect as if you thrust your walking-stick through me or through your own shadow."

"But," I asked eagerly, "how would he destroy our navy in an hour?"

"Why," said the Friar, "he and Sir Humphrey Davy have invented an explosive of such vast power, that a single pound weight would destroy the strongest ironclad afloat, and he can fire it from an ordinary shoulder gun, with which he delights to practise at the mountains of Mars. He can chip a thousand-ton mountain top off with a single shot; we have to stop him at it, for he quite spoils the scenery, and alters it so completely that we are in danger of losing ourselves. He calls his destructive agent 'infernite,' and it really is quite diabolical."

"And of speed in merchant vessels," I remarked, "what of that?"

"There you are all wrong again, you have gone right off the proper path. Why, your passenger vessels actually float on the *surface* of the sea, instead of fathoms below it; consequently you have both wind and waves to contend with, which is absurdly and palpably wrong to any one who gives the least reflection to the matter.

"Set your inventive faculties to work, control and compress your air—by the way, see that you get it pure, sea air is always best and safest—sink your hermetically-sealed ship by hydraulic arrangements, pitch your great

thumping steam monsters overboard, and propel your vessel with civilized and cleanly electric force, and there you are! America in twenty-four hours! India in three days! China in five! and Australia in a week!!

"This speed should have been attained years since; but your engineers are so in love with great smoky furnaces, steel monsters, and grimy coal and grease, that it will take some time before they get off with the ugly old love (steam) and on with the elegant new one (electric force)."

I nodded approval, and put another query. "Can we do anything more to improve the locomotive engine both as to safety and speed? Of course I gather from what you have just said that electricity could be made to take the place of steam, and then we should get a much quicker and safer service of trains than at present."

"Quicker service of trains?" he echoed, and looked at me in feigned amazement. "Trains and locomotives, did you say? Why, my dear friend, you astonish me. To improve your service, gather up all your network of iron rails, but leave your stations intact for the present, and pitch both the rails and the horrid shrieking engines into the midst of the Atlantic, not into the North Sea, for that is so shallow that the immense pile of old iron would cause an obstruction to submarine navigation, and quite spoil the fishing-ground, though it would be an excellent iron tonic to the fish.

"Then, having done that, invent a neat little electric aërostat—it can and has been done by us—and simply fly from point to point, from station to station if you will, noiselessly and expeditiously. Edinburgh or Dublin in three hours, or St. Petersburg in ten, would be a fair speed. What are they made of, do you say? Well, there is that bothering bond that seals my lips, or I would

willingly make a sketch and give you a specification with pleasure.

"You know that certain chemicals produce certain gases. Gas is a power: it may be converted into a motive power. Do you follow?"

I bowed.

"For the fabric: do you know that six goose quills will support a man?—if not, I can assure you they will; there is lightness and strength for you! What can, with equal economy, be beaten thinner or is lighter than aluminium?—a new metal with you, I find. For propelling mechanism, study the wing of the swift-flying birds, created by our Great Spirit; you cannot *improve* on that, but you can modify and adapt it to your particular purpose."

Then casting his eye upon my umbrella, which was lying open beside me (for I had used it to keep the sun off), he bade me observe its form, which I did.

"In that worm-produced fabric," said he, pointing to the silk shade, "you have the form of the best sustainer (parachute) that even we have yet discovered. There! I have mentioned your principal materials, now set to work, and do not longer disfigure your beautiful islands with iron webs, rabbit burrows, and crawling beetles, for such, I am told, your railway systems appear to the inhabitants of your satellite the Moon, who have very powerful telescopes, and are fond of gazing at their big brother the Earth.

"Really, when I come to reflect upon the condition of you mortals, your whole system seems strange; here, six centuries after I have left the earth, you are actually eating and drinking just as when I was among you (and I was no mean connoisseur of a bottle of Sack or

Malmsey), and, consequently, you are always ill and ailing. It therefore follows; as a matter of course, that half of you die before there is any necessity for you to do so.

“For the first thousand or two years after the Creation, people knew what was good for them, and partook of everything fresh and good, and lived for centuries ; but now it appears to me that you have a system in vogue among you called adulteration, by which one half of the community seeks to partially poison the other half, simply to gather together as many pieces of gold as they can hoard in a few years, and when they die they leave these gold coins to some one else to scatter to the four winds and the Evil One, for their so-called amusement. All very nice, I dare say, but why do you not do as I did—work, and discover the Philosopher’s Stone and Elixir Vitæ ! Then, having discovered them, you could be as rich as you pleased, and live as long as you had any desire to.”

“Interrupting you,” I ventured, “would it be against your bond to impart to me, a mortal, the secret of those two great discoveries you claim to have made when on earth ? Would you be induced by anything I could offer you, or do for you, to divulge the component parts of your Elixir Vitæ ?”

The jolly little man laughed till his sides vibrated like a blanc-mange, at the very idea of *my* being able to do anything for *him*, or offer him any equivalent for his priceless secret of continued life.

“Ha ! ha ! Ho ! ho ! My friend, you would be the death of me if it were possible to kill a spirit ; I declare I feel quite a curious feeling just where my ribs ought to be, by indulging in such hearty laughter as I have not experienced for quite a century.

“My friend, I will give you the recipe for the Elixir of Life with pleasure, as it was my own discovery *previous* to my death, so that I may divulge it to any one I choose. The ingredients are so simple that it is a wonder scores of alchemists did not discover it as I did, but doubtless it was the simplicity of the various items that caused them to miss the mark. They searched for curious and complex mixtures, for crystals and ores, powders and nostrums, distillations and subtle gases, and other things of a complex nature, when the real articles were right under their very noses, and *in everyday use* !

“Here is the solution to the buried secret ; for buried it was when they laid me in the grave six centuries ago, for I told it to no man, nor did I take advantage of it to prolong my own life, as I had worked so hard that I longed for a thorough rest, and am now enjoying it, for we spirits never tire.

“Take one ounce of acetic acid, it is a preventive of frivolity ; one pound of pure alcohol, which gives spirit and vigour whenever used ; of laudanum three drams, as a soporific giving a quiet and steady demeanour ; and add two drams of ground cloves, for spice is very preserving to the body.

“Next you add three pints of distilled water, which is a very cleansing agent, and with it put in a few twigs of birch, which is a capital corrective, and every man requires somewhat of the kind at times.

“Then you take a few—but I am sure you will forget all these things, so, if you will lend me a piece of paper and a pencil (which are things we lacked in our day), I will write down the various ingredients and quantities for you, and you can get them made up at any chemist’s ; here are twenty-seven ingredients in all, each good for

something ; miss one, and you spoil the harmony of the whole, and the prescription is useless. Everything must be absolutely free from adulteration, or only a partial success will be the result."

Then for a quarter of an hour he scribbled away, occasionally pausing, and cocking his head upon one side to recollect things which he had stored in his busy memory centuries ago.

His smoky brain revolved at a great rate as I watched him write the formula.

"There," said he at last, as he handed me the wonderful secret, which was to make me live to see ships float under water, people fly through the air, and electricity the great motive power of the world, "I think you will find that correct, and I shall be glad to meet you here this day one hundred years hence, to see how matters are going with you. By the way, what is the time?"

I now perceived that it was grown quite dark, and the stars were twinkling through the trees, a fact which I had not before noted, so absorbed had I been with the strange conversation of my visitor.

I looked at my watch.

"It is five minutes past ten o'clock," I said.

"Goodness me!" said the friar ; "how I shall have to hurry. I should have left at seven o'clock, as I am due at Mars not later than midnight, or I forfeit my liberty for one generation ; and thirty years without a fly to some planet or other is no joke. Ta, ta!"

And as I looked at my jolly friend he scared me by suddenly becoming perfectly incandescent ; he glowed for an instant like a furnace at white heat, then with a whizz and a flash he was gone so quickly that the eye could only follow him for a trice, and then he disappeared

into space ; at least his bodily form disappeared by apparently transforming itself into a star, which grew smaller and less brilliant, till it was entirely lost amid the myriads of others which studded the sky.

I smelt for brimstone, but there was not even a sign of it that I could detect.

I felt dizzy, and stiff, and stupid, but gathering my umbrella, books, and flask together (the latter quite empty, by the by, possibly upset), I made for Minehead, but found it a long and difficult walk. Sitting so long in one position had cramped and affected my legs to such a degree, that it was with much meandering and uncertainty that I reached my apartments near the little pier.

My wife, good soul, was waiting up for me, and as I entered she pointed to the clock, which was then striking twelve.

Thinking of Friar Bacon, I exclaimed half aloud—"I wonder if he reached home in time? What a flight, thirty-five million miles in less than three hours!"

At this my wife shook her head, and remarked that bed was the best place for me ; and as she kindly assisted me to undress, I did not contradict her.

When I awoke next morning I felt in a very unsettled state of mind, and collecting my wandered senses, I endeavoured to account to my wife for my absence of the previous day, by telling her of my adventure with the monk in Horner Woods. She was moved when I told her that the paper in my waistcoat pocket would *prove* what I asserted to be true.

"Kindly feel in the right-hand pocket of my waistcoat, get out the paper, and read for yourself," I remarked quietly but triumphantly.

She felt as directed.

Nothing was there save a large hole !

I had lost the paper ; and with it my character for veracity and the knowledge of " How to Live for Ever " into the bargain.

AFTER CONCLUSION OF STORY.

I hardly like to say it, but I verily believe my guest had been drinking heavily, and that he was suffering from *delirium tremens*, or, as it is commonly called for conciseness, " the blues " ; anyway, when he left the caravan he was mumbling to himself, casting furtive glances to right and left, and gesticulating very much as he walked down the road. I am afraid I did the poor man a great wrong in giving him so much raw spirit ; but then I console myself with the knowledge that I was only indirectly to blame, having merely placed the decanter upon the table, as I would for any other visitor, and expressed a wish that he would help himself ; with which suggestion he complied by diminishing my spirit store more rapidly than I had intended. The following day I sent him a pamphlet upon temperance, as a set-off against my ill-timed hospitality, and trust that he read it with profit.

My guest was such a confirmed believer in spirits that he would have made a capital medium for any professional spiritualist. He was familiar with almost every spirit nameable, and had been at one time or other possessed of them all, knowing where to find both the best and the worst of them.

V.

INTRODUCTION TO "BARBE ROUGE."

THE gentleman to whom I am indebted for the story of the old pirate, "Barbe Rouge," is now a well-known artist and author, and as I knew him to be the hero of several adventures, I was anxious to obtain a story from him. Having gained an introduction to him, I put myself in his way when passing through Norwich. After a long chat, he expressed a wish to inspect my caravan, which I had left at Thorpe, the prettiest village in Norfolk, so we strolled down to it together.

Being of a roving and adventurous disposition, he showed great delight at my house on wheels and its comfortable internal arrangements, and having friends at Lynn whom he wished to visit, he begged to be allowed to accompany me on my journey as far as the borders of the county. I readily acquiesced, and found him such a companionable fellow, that our roundabout journey to Lynn—distant some fifty miles by the nearest road from Norwich—actually took us *three weeks* to accomplish. My comrade was delighted with the gipsy life, and but that his leisure time was at an

end, he would have accompanied me further on my progress through the fens of Lincolnshire.

We met with several adventures while we were together, one of which I must relate.

Harry Nilford (such was my friend's name) strolled out one evening to indulge in a bath, while I stayed in to cook the supper, it being my day for *chef* duty; and as we were camped within a mile of the sea, between Blakeney and Morston, I expected him back in about an hour or rather more, but it was upwards of two hours before he returned, looking very excited. He had taken my gun with him, thinking it very probable that he might come across a stray rabbit for the pot, and I naturally inferred, from his sparkling eyes, that he had been successful in his quest.

"What do you think I've shot, old fellow?"

"Rabbits?"

"No; guess again. Something bigger and rarer."

"Well, then, a hare?"

"No—bigger and rarer still," said he, smiling at my puzzled look.

I guessed all kinds of things, but was every time wrong, so I asked the question—

"Is it fish, fowl, or fur?" I have heard of large fish being shot, so included it in my query.

"Well," said my friend, "it is fur, and I might almost say fish also, for it is a splendid swimmer."

I puzzled over the riddle for some time, and then, after having failed in guessing an otter, gave it up as something beyond me.

"Then if you cannot guess, or even get near it, I will tell you. It was *a seal*—a very rare visitor to this coast indeed, in fact, such a thing has not been seen for

many years along the hundred miles of coast which bounds the county of Norfolk."

He had shot the seal as it flippered itself along the yielding sand, upon which it had been basking, to make its escape to the sea. Both barrels, however, did not suffice to kill it, and the animal got to the water, and would have made its escape, although severely wounded, had not Harry rushed into the sea and given the soft-eyed seal its quietus with the butt of the gun.

It was too heavy for him to bring away, and was, moreover, covered with blood, so he dug a shallow trench in the sand, and placing the body in it, covered it up and left it.

We arranged to go down to the beach early in the morning and bring our prize back in triumph; accordingly, about seven o'clock next day, we went, but to our astonishment the seal was gone!

Could it have revived and made its escape?

We searched about for signs.

We noticed footmarks leading down to the water's edge, and also the prints of a dog's paws in the sand, and, lower down still, we saw where the keel of a boat had cut its way when rowed ashore and beached.

We put these things together, and came to the conclusion that my friend had been watched and the seal stolen after his departure. Anyway it was gone; and although we inquired at both Blakeney and Morston, and offered a reward, we could learn no tidings of the missing animal.

We went sorrowfully on our way, and two days after were at Burnham Thorpe (Nelson's birthplace), when we heard at the village inn of a hairy mermaid being exhibited at Brancaster. We took no notice of the news

but when we reached the village with a Roman name, we found the people quite excited over the wonderful mermaid, and with numerous other visitors paid our pennies to go in and see the curiosity—when behold, it was Harry's seal!

Of course Harry demanded it, but the men would not give it up, and as Brancaster does not contain a policeman, force had to be resorted to. My friend was a big, strong fellow, and I being scarcely less in size or strength, we made a good fight of it, and placed the seal in my van and made off. The villagers became very abusive and threatening, and many missiles were thrown at us, but we got away as quickly as possible, I handling the reins, and Harry keeping off the crowd with a gun in one hand and a whip, which he used pretty freely, in the other.

We had three panes of glass broken, sundry cuts and bruises, and a black eye, which latter fell to my lot, on our side. We could not quite tell the number of the evening's casualties; all we knew was that more than one bloody nose and contused cheek were to be seen.

The seal was skinned and dressed in Lynn, and Harry had a waistcoat made for himself, and a fine lappet cap for me, which has been a great comfort in winter travelling, when the easterly winds are blowing.

The following story of "Barbe Rouge" he kindly touched up, at my request, after I had written it, as I received it from his lips while in a mesmeric state, for, being a story within a story, it is rather difficult of interpretation. The case stands thus: "Barbe Rouge," a piratical sea-dog of the eighteenth century, enacted a tragedy, of which he left a record, which record, a hundred odd years later, was found by my friend, Harry

Nilford, on the Isle of Jethou, one of the Channel Isles. The story of the tragedy he committed to memory, and in a hypnotic state recounted to me.* Being a complex story I have, as I mention above, requested him to touch it up here and there. This he has done with the following result.

BARBE ROUGE.

VISITORS to Guernsey will remember that opposite the entrance to the Harbour of St. Peter Port, at a distance of about three miles, lies a curiously-shaped island called Jethou, which rises from the sea in a graceful curve, and looks at first sight like an immense turtle, or a huge floating dish-cover. It is a small island, probably not more than a third of a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad, but is so steep, that in the centre it reaches an altitude approaching three hundred feet.

It is a solid granite island, covered in most parts with bracken and furze, which makes it a very paradise for the rabbits with which it abounds. There are two small stone-built houses upon it, around one of which is a prolific fruit and vegetable garden. There are out-buildings attached, and at a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile from the white house is an apology for a harbour.

It is a remarkably nice place for a holiday—sunny, healthy, quiet, and not too far from aid in case of

* Those of my readers who would like to read the adventures of Harry Nilford should obtain *Jethou, or Crusoe Life in the Channel Isles*, published by Messrs. Jarrold and Sons, 10 and 11, Warwick Lane, London, E.C.

sickness or accident ; but it is not a resort for the general public, being private property.

It was on this island that in 186— a young Norfolk gentleman elected to spend twelve months as a recluse, or as he was pleased to term it—a Crusoe.

He went to the island for two reasons ; one of which was the anticipation of a happy and adventurous time, and the other the winning of a wager (that he would not leave the island before twelve months had expired). In neither object was he disappointed.

While papering the walls of his little sitting-room, he had the good fortune to find a parchment, hidden away in a niche in the wall, which had hitherto been concealed by the thick covering of wall-paper, of which he peeled off no less than five layers. He had read Edgar Allen Poe's story of "The Golden Beetle," and finding a parchment covered with hieroglyphics, he surmised that if he could only decipher it there might be as thrilling a sequel as followed on the solution of the cryptogram in Poe's story.

Unfortunately he was not so clever as the man in the story, and failed—unassisted—in discovering the secret of the parchment.

The puzzling document was a list of some sort which the finder could not understand, as it was in French ; beneath it was a drawing of a square with a human skull in the centre, from which radiated lines ending in certain letters, and having figures upon the rays.

The solution was discovered, however, after the young Crusoe had been on the island for upwards of twelve months (he stayed eighteen months in all), and in a most unexpected manner.

Being a Crusoe, it was not at all a surprising matter

that he should have a man Friday, and one day during a storm a Friday really did appear, in the form of a French sailor, whose little vessel was wrecked upon the hostile granite shores of Jethou. The man saved, the sole survivor of a crew of four, was at once christened Monday, from the day on which he was saved. This man (Alec Ducas) spoke very fair English, and the two young men soon became fast friends.

One day the young Englishman, whose name was Harry Nilford, bethought him of his curious parchment, and producing it from his box, asked his friend if he could decipher it. The first part of the document was quickly read, and no doubt astonished the finder. It was as follows—

“THIS IS THE LAST WILL of Jean Tussaud (sometimes known as Barbe Rouge), Master Mariner, of C——.

“The person who is lucky enough to find my treasure house, I hereby declare to be my heir, and whatsoever he finds shall be his, and for his sole benefit.

“My chief mate, William Trefry, a Cornish man, wished to become my heir before my death, but we could not agree upon that point, although I gave him possession of my *petites fées* (little fairies) and a key, also a valuable knife, for an inheritance. The bearings of my treasure-house are these.”

Then followed the curious drawing with the death's-head centre, followed by the words—“The lucky one will find the following property.”

Here followed a long list of the articles stowed away; winding up with the words—“and my box of pretty *petites fées*.”

"I leave Jethou to-night to make a voyage to the West Indies, to see what business can be done there. I leave this paper so that, should I never return, the goods I have so industriously, and at such risk, gathered together, may be of service to the person who may have skill enough to discover their whereabouts.

"Signed, JEAN TUSSAUD (Barbe Rouge),

"February 19, 17—."

For weeks the two young men puzzled their wits over the document; but to abbreviate this narrative,* they ultimately succeeded in discovering the place of concealment.

It was in the centre of the garden, at the rear of the house, and after great toil in digging they came upon the skeleton of a man, and were about to fill up the large hole they had made, imagining, in their horror, that they had come upon a grave instead of a treasure-house, when one of them saw a glittering something protruding from the sternum of the skeleton, which proved to be the jewelled haft of a dagger, which had undoubtedly given the death-blow to the tenant of the grave, being driven in with immense force, up to the hilt, quite through the breast-bone. Clearing the bony relic, they found, suspended around the neck, by a length of silver chain, which was much oxidized, a couple of rusty keys.

This discovery led them to connect the skeleton with the mate, Trefry, mentioned in the document, and they continued their search, which was rewarded by their finding a large collection of miscellaneous articles,

* The unravelling of the enigma may be found in *Jethou*.

among which were numerous weapons, bundles of gold lace, several cups of the same metal, packages of once costly clothing and fine linen (now mouldering with age), copes, chasubles, and a beautiful jewelled mitre wrapped in a bullock's hide, boots, sashes, etc.

Beneath all these, in a hollowed space, was a chest securely padlocked, which was duly hoisted out and burst open, and in it were discovered seventeen bags, each containing a hundred Spanish doubloons, three parchment books, and last, but far from least, a small golden casket of exquisite workmanship, filled quite full of precious stones in their natural, rough state, except a very few which were cut and polished. In all they would have filled a pint measure. These were Barbe Rouge's *petites fées*—his little fairies.

* * * * *

Now what I have recounted so far is a kind of prologue to what follows. The purport of my story is to show how the skeleton came in the treasure vault, which was opened by our good friends, Nilford and Ducas, with whom, however, we have nothing further to do.

I must point out that the following narrative is what I have gathered from the pages of one of the three books found in "Barbe Rouge's" chest, two of them being logs of his voyages (and *such* voyages), and the third a kind of private diary. I have pieced together the somewhat disconnected jottings of Red Beard into the following story, drawing *slightly* on my imagination to fill in the gaps.

* * * * *

On the morning of April 28, 175—, the vessel owned and commanded by "Barbe Rouge," called *La Chauve-souris*, was lying quietly at anchor in the little haven at

the back of the lofty pinnacle of rocks known as La Crevichon, for she was to sail on the morrow, or the second day at latest, for a cruise in the West Indies. She was a smart little schooner, mounting ten guns, and carried the large complement of thirty-eight men, for she was what the French Government were pleased to call a licensed privateer, although, if public report went for anything, she might with more propriety have been stigmatized as something with a much more ugly name. Whatever people might call her was no concern of Jean Tussaud (which was Barbe Rouge's real name), *he* called her a privateer, and so we also will call her, for the word *pirate* is not at all a nice-sounding word.

She had some weeks previously returned from a very prosperous cruise in the Mediterranean, and although she came home short-handed, to the extent of eight men, she brought with her, as some sort of human equivalent, two very fine women, both of whom were young and handsome.

One was a fair Circassian damsel called Retté, and her companion, an English girl named Mary Whitford. These fair ones Barbe Rouge had taken from an Algerian vessel which he intercepted on her voyage from Cyprus to Dargelli, whither the girls were being conveyed to the sheik Obdurrah, as reinforcements for his harem. How the girl Mary Whitford could thus be sold Tussaud's book says not; but he captured her, and brought her and Retté to Jethou, where he took them ashore to his stone house, much to the regret of William Trefry, the mate, who had fallen greatly in love with Mary during the voyage home. Barbe Rouge saw what was in the wind, and watched the couple unnoticed, but with a hawkish, jealous eye.

Trefry feared his skipper, for he had seen him perform cruel deeds that made the boldest heart on board tremble, and because Barbe Rouge's giant form possessed the strength of two men ; so, fearing any personal encounter, he resolved by stratagem to carry out a scheme for Mary's release which he had been elaborating during the last few days of the voyage.

He foresaw that the two girls would be immediately taken ashore on the arrival of *La Chauve-souris* at Jethou, and with this in view he arranged two or three plots with Mary, by which they might escape together to Guernsey ; they also arranged a set of private signals with which to communicate with each other.

As anticipated, an hour after reaching the haven of Jethou, Mary and Retté were taken ashore, and, alas for their hopes, the girls were quartered in a room which did *not* overlook the haven ; and furthermore, they were only allowed out for exercise after dusk, when their jealous protector, Barbe Rouge, accompanied them for a walk round the island.

Thus were their signals of no more avail than a wink in the dark.

The days sped rapidly ; boats went to and from St. Peter Port bringing stores and taking various goods for sale. Half-a-dozen carpenters and a smith, besides the sailmaker and others, were busy with the ship's hull and rigging, refitting and altering, repairing and renewing all kinds of gear, and over these men was placed Trefry, to whom the whole crew looked up as skipper during Barbe Rouge's frequent and prolonged absences ashore on Jethou.

The young Englishman gnawed his very heart away in devising schemes for Mary's release, and his eyes

grew weary with looking for the preconcerted signals from her, but none ever appeared.

Could she have forgotten him?

Was it a case of "out of sight out of mind"? No, that could never be, for the girl's anxious desire was to escape, and reach her dear old Yorkshire home, from which she had been absent nearly two years. She had left it to take a trip on her uncle's bark, *The Develin*, from Whitby to Samos in the Grecian Archipelago, in company with her brother, who was two years her senior.

They reached Samos safely, but one morning, her uncle and brother being ashore, two native boatmen came alongside, one of whom, in fair English, said the old gentleman had sent them "to fetch Mary, to show her some of the sights of the place." Mary accordingly seated herself in their boat, but the men took her to another port, a league up the coast, and thus kidnapped her.

As the days before sailing to the West grew fewer, Trefry became nearly mad with his pent-up feelings; but in the presence of Barbe Rouge had to dissemble and assume as calm a countenance and manner as he possibly could, although at heart he could have wished the old pirate hung at the end of his own gaff.

Only two or three days intervened before the date of sailing, and his very appetite forsook him, and he could not help glaring at the skipper whenever they met; but Barbe Rouge, with an imperturbable countenance, took no notice of the mate's despair, although he well knew what was passing in his heart; he saw the young fellow's terrible struggle with himself, and gloated over it.

Trefry dared not make an open show of concern about Mary, as even at the last moment there might arrive the

opportunity for a rescue, so he held his peace till the morning of April 28th.

As the first grey streak of dawn appeared in the N.E. Trefry stepped on deck and strained his eyes towards the stone house on shore. It was too dark to discern anything in the form of a signal, but he looked ever and anon, and to his great joy did not look in vain.

He could scarce believe his eyes when he saw something appear out of and above a chimney on the old house. It was but a wisp of rag, but it was quite sufficient to denote its purpose as a signal, and Trefry knew its meaning to be an urgent appeal for succour.

One or two of the crew also saw it, and it soon became known to the whole ship's company that the girls were making signals for help; but, though comments were many, no one dared take any action, for the crew of *La Chauve-souris* was, as often happens on privateers and such like vessels, divided into little coteries, each afraid of, or watching the actions of the others.

Barbe Rouge had devotees numbering about twenty, while those whom Trefry could rely upon to take his view of anything on the tapis, he could count on the fingers of his two hands.

Moreover only one day remained. What could he do?

He thought over many schemes for liberating the girls, but could not hit upon one likely to be successful; so, finding his own imaginative faculties at fault, he called two or three of his more intimate cronies together, and placed the case before them in a council in the captain's cabin, while one kept watch.

Many suggestions were made, of various degrees of practical merit, some indeed so sieve-like that they would not hold the water of common-sense at all. Trefry soon found that, great burly brute as he was,

Barbe Rouge had a strong following of staunch men on board ; men who loved the skipper because their natures were coarse and rough, and who saw in him the beautiful ideal of brute strength, stature, and power to command : his very courage and daring delighted them. Sentiment, and the wrongs of others, were nothing to such as they.

Trefry found that, all told, he could only count on eleven others besides himself to help him in the contemplated carrying off of the two girls ; but, to better equalize the numbers, he determined, after dark, to give leave to six or eight of the skipper's staunchest men to take the long-boat, and pull across to Guernsey for a spree.

This was agreed to as part of the programme ; and it was also agreed, that at eleven o'clock that night he should go ashore alone to the stone house, and bring off the girls, while his eleven comrades should arm themselves (from the arm-chest, of which he had the key), and make themselves masters of the ship while he was ashore.

The day passed slowly by, and the shades of night at length fell, draping its mantle of deepening blue over the pretty little island.

At eleven o'clock Trefry, well armed, went ashore as arranged.

The night was dark, for there was no moon, and calm, for there was but little wind.

Quietly he crept round the side of the house, and taking off his boots went up the stone steps leading to the garden at the rear, where he quickly became aware of a faint glow of light rising from behind a tremendous mound of earth in the very centre of the garden.

He paused and listened ; then silently crept across the garden on all fours to the mound, up which he as noiselessly climbed, and peeped over.

He beheld a great excavation several feet square, from which the light came, and peering over the edge, he saw on the opposite side of the wall of the hole, the shadow of Barbe Rouge's great head and beard, projected by the light of a lantern placed on this side of the pit. The shadow moved but slightly, showing that the fiery skipper was deeply engrossed in some task or other of a weird nature, or he would not have chosen night for his work.

Like a flash of light it entered Trefry's brain that the old buccaneer had killed the girls, or at least one of them, and was now hiding the evidences of his guilt by burying the body in the garden.

However, there *might* still be a chance that they were alive; and not to leave a stone unturned, he resolved, now that he knew Barbe Rouge was in the hole, to go round the house and gently tap at each window, to endeavour to obtain a response from those he was in quest of. This idea he carried into effect, but without receiving any reply to his tapping, and he again went to the mound and peeped over—Barbe Rouge was still busy, as his shadow, bobbing about in the uncertain light of the horn lantern, proved.

Could it be possible that the skipper had left the door of the house unlocked? He would see at all events, and back to the house he went. Upon pressing the handle, to his great joy the door swung back, and he quietly entered. For fear of being discovered, should Barbe Rouge enter the doorway, he leaned a stick, which he found in the passage, against the door on the inside, so that any one entering from without could not fail to knock it down with a clatter upon the stone floor, and thus give him warning.

Carefully he searched each of the five rooms which the house contained, breathing ever and anon the names of Mary and Retté, but when he came to the last room, and found it empty, his feelings overcame him, and, but for some wine which he discovered on a table, he would certainly have fainted with horror, thinking that his Mary and her companion had been cruelly murdered, and were now being buried by his captain, the dreadful Barbe Rouge.

More wine; and then he gradually grew into a frenzy, swearing that but one task remained, which ere he left Jethou should be accomplished.

This was to revenge the deaths of Mary and Retté by killing the monster who was now sitting in the pit, which in another minute should be his tomb. Burning with rage, so that he shook in every limb, he had difficulty in calming his feelings sufficiently to accomplish his task in an unflinching manner.

He paused to calm his quivering nerves, and then went gently along the passage, pistol in hand, to where he had left the broom-stick at the door. It remained as he had left it; so he quietly leaned it against the wall, and nervously began to open the door, for fear the giant's form might be about to enter.

Inch by inch it opened and he peeped out.

All was quiet.

With his pistol still grasped tightly he made for the mound, intending to shoot Barbe Rouge in his self-made grave, but before reaching the spot, he fell prone over a large piece of granite rock; he lay perfectly still, for fear Barbe Rouge should peep out of his hole to see what had caused the noise.

For some minutes he lay silent but alert; then, as



“ Suddenly a heavy hand seized him from behind.”—p. 121.

the skipper did not appear, he arose, returned his flintlock to his belt, and picked up the huge stone at his feet.

This he resolved should be the instrument of Barbe Rouge's death—a stone for a dog—reserve the bullet for a nobler foe!

Up the bank of earth he staggered with his burden. Yes! Barbe Rouge was still at work—he could see his white stocking cap and the shaggy red locks beneath; so, pausing, he raised the mass of stone high above his head, thinking to hurl it down with crushing force upon the cranium of the monster below, when suddenly a heavy hand seized him from behind, and the stone, losing its balance, fell from his grasp with a thud into the hole. He gave one glance round, his last on this earth, for his eyes met the infuriated orbs of Barbe Rouge himself, who, with a stroke swift as sight, drove a long keen dagger deep into the young Englishman's breast. Without a groan he fell dead into the yawning gulf before him.

* * * * *

With a chuckle at the success of his fiendish work, Barbe Rouge quietly descended a short ladder into the great vault he had dug, and took out a book from an ironbound chest at the bottom, in which he calmly wrote certain notes, stating that he had killed Trefry for endeavouring to meddle with his "*petites fées*," or little fairies, but whether he referred to the two girls or the gems is not very evident.

Trefry was a doomed man from the time he stepped ashore, as, through a spy on board *La Chauve-souris*, Barbe Rouge was cognizant of all that had taken place on board the schooner. He received information that

Trefry would come ashore between eleven and twelve, and had prepared a ruse to deceive and place him at his mercy.

He made a dummy head with a red tow wig and beard in imitation of himself, and on the top placed his old white stocking cap. This little device was fixed at the bottom of the excavation upon a cross pole fastened to an upright. At the end of the cross pole which touched the ground a live rabbit was fastened, that, moving about a foot from right to left, the dummy head was made to oscillate. A lantern was so placed as to throw a shadow of the head upon the side of the pit farthest from the house, and the trap thus artfully baited caused the downfall of the gallant young Cornishman, Trefry.

Barbe Rouge signified his intention of leaving Jethou with his fair ones next day for a voyage to the West Indies, and from a record in a St. Peter Port document, we find that he actually did sail on May 1st, after giving a grand farewell entertainment to many of the good townspeople of St. Peter Port on the previous evening.

Thus we see that virtue is not always triumphant, and that every dog has his day, including the somewhat numerous species known as the Sea Dog.

After a year or two I met the adventurous Nilford again, when he informed me that he had put my van quite in the shade by a novel idea of his own. It appears that he was so struck with my mode of life that he purchased an old gipsy van, and rambled about in it for a week or two together, just when the fit seized

him. Then the idea occurred to him of making a pair of boats, into which the wheels of his van were fitted, and by decking the space fore and aft between the boats, he went all over the Broads, and finally coasted it to Essex, whence he had the good or ill luck to be blown over to Holland. As he has written the history of his adventures, it is no business of mine further to divulge them here, but will content myself with calling the reader's attention to a book entitled, *Afloat in a Gipsy Van*.*

* Jarrold and Sons, 10 and 11, Warwick Lane, London, E.C.

VI.

INTRODUCTION TO "ROBIN HOOD IN WINTER."

I HAVE somehow a knack of running against men who, without being notable, have still something in their composition which makes them conspicuous among their fellows. Such a man was he from whom I obtained the following story; for it was told me first by my informant *vivâ voce*, and afterwards corrected by him, with an ancient quill pen, which had a habit now and again of spattering the ink, after the fashion of a pyrotechnic display, wherever there happened to be any roughness of the paper. He loved the antique, and lived a long way in rear of the times; quill pens were natural pens, he said, and he would have nothing to do with the modern steel rubbish, as he disdainfully termed our great up-to-date invention. His house, furniture, and clothes were antique, and so were his very person, face, and figure.

He was short, thin, curved, and drab. I say drab, because no other colour will so well describe his complexion, which was of a parchment hue, and of the same leathery texture. Small slits of eyes, a hooked

nose, wide mouth with thin lips, hollow cheeks, and a broad and high forehead ; that was the facial appearance of my learned friend, the antiquary.

I met him near Birmingham, whither he had been to purchase a bundle of old books, with which he was wearily toiling onward to his village home. He sat by the roadside on a grassy bank with his treasures, girt about by a strong leathern strap, by his side.

Being a very hot day, the old man had a large red bandana handkerchief in his hand, with which he patted his perspiring face. I asked him, by way of obtaining an opening for a conversation, if I was on the right road to Coventry, whereupon he informed me that he was walking to Meridew, a distance of twelve miles along the road to Coventry, and if I would give him a lift he would act as guide.

I obliged the old man, although I knew the road perfectly, having travelled the district before, but, as I love companionship, I thought it a good opportunity for indulging my hobby.

I found the old gentleman excellent company, and on arriving at Meridew, discovered that he owned a very pretty, little, old-fashioned house standing in its own grounds. Being both good talkers, and our ideas running mainly in the same groove, my new friend invited me to spend a few days with him, and I gladly availed myself of his kind hospitality.

The story of "Robyn Hoode in Winter" he had discovered at an old book shop at Coventry, and was lucky enough to become owner of the precious document, for the insignificant but handy coin yclept a shilling. He had read and re-read the old parchment so many times, that he had quite got it by heart, and

so much had it engrossed his mind, that when I put him to sleep one evening he reproduced it vocally, as if he were reciting it to an audience.

He had at different times discovered other very curious documents, copies of which he pressed upon me, and some of them I may, at a future time, venture to inflict upon the indulgent public.

ROBIN HOOD IN WINTER.

I, ROGER AYLMER, clerke to ye Abbot of Croweland Abbey in Lincolnshire, doe hereby sweare that what I herein do write is ye fulle and whole truth and nothing but ye truth of my seizure by ye outlawe Robyn Hode, and that which I do heare write is to prove to ye Abbot of Fountaines Abbey in Yorkshire, that I dyd to ye best of my mighte and courage, seek to protect ye goodes belonging to him from ye rascally outlawe; which sayd goodes were in my keepyng when they were by force y'parted from me.

In October 1196 Our goode Father ye Abbot (of Croweland) dyd receiue from Fountaines Abbey, an order for certain goodes to be sent thither, to wit: six score yardes of Lincolne cloth, three score yardes of scarlet cloth, certain rolles of leather and sundrie other goodes.

I was sent offe with four serving men and two yeomen, to whom, partly, we looked for sustenance on our way, as the forests of Nottingham Shire and Barneys Dale doe abound in many and gret dere, which be ye Kyng hys property. Nevertheless, ye Kyng being

away in Palestyne fightynge ye Paynim, men doe take of hys dere withouten leve.

Our traine dyd consist of six mules, bearing ye goodes, and seven others which dyd beare myself and my menne. Ye weather being clere and colde we dyd make right goode waye, passing safely thro' the forests of Notts wyth but one mishappe.

At a lowe parte in a woode we dyd com upon a boggy place, near unto which was a gret pool of water, engirdled rounde about with rushes and eke with tall redes, and thynkinge it might be goode to water our mules there, we dyd caste about for a patheway, to lede to the sayd water, which anon we dyd find.

The yeomen led ye way, but we had not far advanced when a gret wild boare, with horrid snortyngs and squeals dyd attack one of oure mules, and although both yeomen with their longbows dyd fill him with sundrie arrowes, yet dyd he not desist from his bellowing and goreing. Then straightway dyd ye bowels of ye mule gush out upon ye grounde from ye tearing of ye crewel tarshes of ye boare.

Seeing this, one of ye serving men dyd thrust thro' the boare hys bodie, a great spere, and fixed him to ye earthe; nevertheless no manne dare venture near, so gret was ye rage of ye furious beast. Then dyd ye serving men set upon him and overcame him, so that he preasently dyd dye, and from hys carcase we dyd make a fulle hearty meale.

Ye mule which was y'stricken ded, was that on which we dyd carry our cooking gear, the which being packed upon a freshe mule, he dyd rebel at ye noise of the tinne and copper pottes and pannes, which as he dyd gambol and kicke dyd make much dullor, till the mule

being tyred with his prancyng did act more peacefully and get him gone quietly.

Anon we reached ye forest of Barneys Dale, which as alle menne know is ye chieftest haunte of that rascal outlawe, Robyn Hode and hys menne.

Entering into ye forest my menne dyd beg me to goe around, for feare we might mete with ye bold robber, to which I dyd reply that "Were it in the days of summer, ye name of Robyn Hode might scare even me; a manne of much courage and stomach for ye fighte; but it being the wintertyde, I cared nought for hym, as he woulde be hyding in some snugge village on ye craggy moors. I woulde therefore hie me thro' ye forest, without let or hynderance, and see what manner of place Robyn dyd love, and that with mine owne eyen."

Into Barneys Dale we rode right merrilie, one of ye serving menne playing blythely upon his sackbutt, y'whylst I dyd sing songs most lustilie, soe that when we dyd join our voices in chorus, the foreste dyd helpe us greatly to swell ye sounde, which dyd echo and ringe against ye gret bowes and bolls of ye trees. Thys dyd we to keep in goode hearte, and while we dyd thus divert ourselves, it being towards ye houre of noone, we dyd com to a gret cliffe, near which dyd grow manny noble trees, and at ye feet of ye cliffe dyd laye a mass of tangled underwood and a faire barne or storehouse.

As ye winde dyd blowe somewhat sore, and ye gret cliffe dyd give shelter therefrom, we dyd alite from our mules, intending there to dress our victuals.

Finding a pathway or loke to ye foote of ye cliffe, we dyd secure its shelter and lited us a fire, which was

thereby screened from ye colde winde. Then dyd we perceive that ye cliffe was full of gret holes and caves, some of which were stopped uppe with rough bordes of wode against them, which dyd make us marvel what might be behinde them.

Then did we guess what they mought be ; and some sayd it maye be soe and soe, and others sayed it is thys or that, till one sayd it maye be ye hiding-place of Robyn Hode, in ye faire tyme of ye yeare, but others sayd no, it is a place for woodemen and they who doe mynd cattel.

But one of my serving men being curious to knowe what was within these caves, dyd with hys handes begin to pull downe some of ye boardes, ye which dyd make a kynd of doorway, whereupon came an arrow, which dyd pin hys hande to the woode, and he dyd cry out in gret payn for us to release him.

Then ran forward Thomas à Boston, one of ye ycomen, to give succor, but whan he dyd put forthe hys hande to plucke out the arrowe from hys comrade, straiteway flew anoder arrowe, which smiting him on ye face, dyd pierce his two cheekes, soe that ye feathers of the arrowe were wet with hys bloude.

Anon came a loude voice which alle might heare, though ye speaker no manne coulde see :

“Stande alle ! Upon ye erthe your weapons throwe.”

Thys we dyd, when there advanced into ye lytell open space before ye caves, a stalwart man y’clad in green clothe of goode pryce, having in his hande a long-bowe to which an arrow was notched. At his right side he dyd weare a goodlie sword, and from his left shouder hung a crooked horne. He hadde on a mantel

of sad color, but of thicke texture, to keepe him from ye inclemency of ye weather.

“Who seeke you here?” he cry’d. “Why brake you downe in wantonness ye dwelling of a poore forester?”

Then dyd I answer him and saye—

“We be but poore wayfayrers halting on our way to cook our store of victuals, and dyd but mene to peep into the caves, to see if aney manne dyd dwell therein this winter of the yeare.”

Then dyd ye manne, with a gret oathe, declare that never dyd he see a poore traveller wend his waye through the forest with such goodlie retinue and beastes, and that he must firste enquire into my state, before I went thitherfrom.

With that he tooke his bugle and dyd blowe a lusty blast upon hys curled horne, and anon came a reply from far awaye in ye foreste.

Then ye bold robber, for we dyd guess it was Robyn himself, dyd set him on ye gnarléd root of a gret tree and waited patiently; and soe perforce dyd we, being afeard of ye man. Nevertheless, I dyd gaze my fyll upon ye bolde outlawe before me, and marry, he was a right sturdy fellow, tall, and of a proportionate bignesse of lymbe, comely of feature, and with a swarthy visage, hys hair and beard of ye sloes colour, and eke had he the eyen of ye falcon; a very proper manne was he and in hys pryme.

Anon as we dyd gaze upon him, and he at us, he dyd put to us sundrie questions, which we dyd answer him very civilly. As he dyd thus question us, and no man dyd come to the sounde of the robber’s bugle, my other yeoman, Robert Baldrow, dyd rise up and saye to Robyn—

“Fellow, why doste thou stop peaceful travellers? Thou arte but one manne and I another, and a staffe in my hande is as goode as one in thine. Have at thee, knave!” and straightway he dyd springe before Robyn, quarter-staffe in hande. Whereat Robyn set an arrow to his bowe, makyng as if he would shoote, at the which Baldrow dyd cry out, “A knave! a coward knave!!”

Then dyd Robyn droppe his bow and to it they went right merrile.

My manne Baldrow's bloode was uppe, and eke was it downe, for Robyn dyd give him such sounding thwacks, that the bloode did run adoune his cheekes and drippe from his chin. Robyn, too, got manie a knock which was harde, and his blacke bearde was rede with blode alsoe.

Bothe dyd swat greatlie, and blowe them like unto oxen, till Robyn by a swingyne blowe, did bring Baldrow downe upon the grounde, where he did crye lustelie for mercie.

While thys fighte dyd last, many great and lyttle men dyd hedge us arounde, till there were quite a score and a halfe of them, and he who appeared to be their leader was in stature ye largest man my eyen dyd ever lite upon. When he stode besyde Robyn, his shoulder was a fulle ynch taller than Robyn hys head; nor was he a thin wastreyl of a manne, but proper and strong withall, and of about ye same age as Robyn Hode, who dyd say he had y'seen thirty and fyve summers.

While the fighte dyd last, my four serving men, who be doubtless arrant knaves, dyd steal away with four of ye mules layden with sundrie goodes, which Robyn

percevyng, he dyd secretly send hys men in searche of them, and in goode time they dyd bring them backe, and deliver them bound to Robyn.

Then Robyn swore a gret othe, that he had never met such scurvy knaves, and did cause them to be bound with cordes to the trunks of fallen trees, with their faces downwards. Then did foure of hys men belabour their breeches with pliable saplings of ye ashe tree, till their strength gave out, when the gret giant, whose name I did afterward find to be Lytell John, did tell the whipped varlets to begone. But so sore were their hams that they dyd but stir at the snail hys pace, makynge y'while loud and sundry bemoanings, and walking in much variety of postures for they were sore hurte.

My mules were meantyme kindly treated, for their burdeyns were released from them, at which I dyd not much joie, for I dyd knowe right well ye character of myne hoste. The food stuffe for our sustenance was taken by ye robber band, and putte in gret yron potts, beneath which fires were lighted, and in but smalle tyme a goode meale was spred before us alle.

They were a motley crew, and many of them dyd looke like unto beggars (for tatters and dyrt) their clothes being very ragged and olde. Many wore gret bands of hay round their legges to keepe them warme, and to fend off ye wet from ye bracken and underwode.

They were not dressed as I had heard tell, alle in Lincolne greene, although a few of the head menne among them dyd dress their lymbs in that cloth, namely, Lytell John, George à Greene, Raynolde Greenleafe and a lyttel man y'clept Muche who was sonne of a miller. Some sayd he was y'clept Muche because he was so

lyttel, but he was a jolly manne withal and was foole or jester of ye party, and dyd keep them all in goode humour lyke unto ye jester in ye Kyng hys court.

Another pretty manne was y'named Will Scadlocke, but as he dyd dress hym in scarlet doublet, his comrades did name him Scarlett, from the colour of hys dress. Many dyd weare buff leather jerkins and brown hose, as it was ye tyme of winter when alle is browne and bare, but quoth Robyn, "In the spring we do don our green raiment like to the leaves of the forest, so that ye dere with their glittering eyen cannot so readilie see us."

Dere were not in plentye, but these bold foresters did make nomble pies of their entrails, which they did salt in gret tubs during the summer. It was a humble, but alsoe a toothesome dysh, when seasoned with sweete herbes.

Robyn hys menne dyd attend to my two wounded menne, and dyd place them on softe couches of bracken, which dyd lie hid in the caves. Me they dyd lodge in a gret barne of wattle and clay, which dyd afford me good shelter. Thys in ye summer was the resorte of cow-herds, who dyd here keep their store and eke slumber, driving in their cattel in stormy weather.

In this shed or barne dyd stande much store of victuals for keepe of ye robbers who dyd remain with their leader through the inclemency of wintertyde. Floure and porke in barrells, pickled herryngs from Yaremouth; beanes, onions, and carrotes; beere and cyder in fayre casks were in gret plentie, all of which store was sent in by ye farmers for many myles around that Robyn might exempt their cattel, menne, and goodes from hys seizure.

Robyn, goode man, dyd place alle my goodes and chattels in one of his caves, that they might be safe from hys comrades, and that no manne might take from them.

Next daye it dyd snow, and everything was covered from sight, and alle assembled in the barne where they had buylt a woode fire, round which they dyd sitte and laye as they liste. Some dyd sing songs, and Muche, the lytell miller, dyd play them many tunes on hys pype, while another merry fellow dyd beat lustily on a tabour or drumme, and thus dyd they beguile the time away right joyouslie, whyle harmony dyd prevail ; but ye said harmonie dyd not laste longe, for one gret quarrelsome rascal dyd grumble that the ale was too bittere with horehound, and some sayd it was a righte goode brew, whereupon they fell to jangling, and the manne who was of gret stature dyd challenge any one to crack his sconce with a bout at quarterstaffe. Another manne, who was of the brede of the greyhond, did thereupon rise uppe and tackle him, and atte it they dyd goe for the full space of an hour ; by which tyme he who was of slender form, had lent his foe soe many and sounding thwacks that the bigge man was fain to crie, "A goe !" and soe ye battel ended amyd muche laughter.

Then goode Robyn dyd saye let us to some more songes and then early to couche ; for to-morrow is Christmas Daye. Then was a gret cup brought in and filled to the brim with meade, which being a noble drinke, was but for Robyn and me, Aylmer, his guest.

It was goode liquor, and we dyd sup it deeplie, when Robyn thinkynge to fleer at my priestly garb, dyd aske

me, "Coulde I wrastle," and I being a lytell in my cups, dyd reply that I could wrastle any outlawe that was ever borne, though it was manie yeares since I had played a bout.

Then dyd we wrastle before alle assembled, and they present dyd laugh heartily to see the figure I dyd cut, being of great girth. Howbeit I dyd styk to Robyn, and by a lucky chance dyd roll him over and dyd sit on his backe, to make mirth for those present; but Robyn dyd not laugh atte alle, being angered that a priest should thus him overthrow; soe when I dyd let him uppe he dyd run at me with gret vengeance in hys eyen, and he soe smote me on the stommick that I dyd pante right mightilie.

Then was I also an angered manne, and having a strong arme dyd requite Robyn with a gret blow of the nose, which dyd blede an it were a runlet of goode rede claret.

To make peace, "Long John," as I dyd hear Lytell John sometime called, dyd com betwixt and dyd part us, and we ware carried off, each to hys bed in a separate cave. So ended the Vigil of Noel.

The morne of Christmas Daye was one which dyd smile over the erthe wyth gret brightness, and alle were astir betimes, and many went divers ways into the woodes to seek for dere. They took but their bows and speares in their handes, leaving the frieze covers of their bowes at home, as there was no damp in the frosty air which might shorten their strings.

Robyn was very surlie, for he had gotten two blacke eyen, and his nose was swollen and red like to ye haws which are sent for birdes food in winter. I was much afearde of the manne, thinkynge he might doe me some

mischiefe for a revenge for ye blowe I had placed upon hys nose, but we dyd shake hands and were friendly, and being Christmas Morne, he woulde have me goe into his cave chambre and pray for him, which I dyd. Althoughe an outlawe hys menne doe say he is of pious mind, praying to ye Blessed Virgin at alle seasons, especially in tyme of gret peril.

When we had our prayers sayd, Lytell John dyd roar out with gret pain, saying that his tooth dyd ache sore, and so it dyd prove, for no manne dare go near him, so greatly dyd he rage. Then he cryd for some one to pull it from his jawe for hym, but no manne dyd offer, tyll home came Wayland, who had of olde tyme been a smyth, and used to the handling of implements.

Lytell John dyd throw himself upon ye placher in ye barne, and foure of the strongest men dyd houlde him downe.

Then dyd Wayland bring forth the hys tools, which he kept in a leathern poke, for many a jobbe dyd he for the companie. Lytell John's eyen dyd roule muche when he dyd see the iron pincers, which Wayland dyd bring forth from the poke, but they being made for horse shoeing were too large for his mouthe, and woulde not worke therein, although it was a large one.

Then Wayland founde him a smaller pair, and with them went to worke agen, upon which Lytell John dyd roar and struggle mightilie, but they who held him being strong men he coulde not get free. Wayland dyd again try, but being used to rough work dyd not set to worke skilfullie, whereupon Will Scadlocke, who had now returned with two hares whych he had shotte, dyd attempt to get out the aching tooth, and with such

address dyd he set to worke, that in but a few minutes he dyd drawe it forth triumphantlie.

Then they dyd waken Lytell John, who had fallen into a kind of trance (in whych he did groan), by rubbing his face with snow and putting ice on ye nape of hys necke.

Soone came home ye merrie menne, some with doe meat and some with a gret dere they had slain ; while Peter the falconer dyd add toe the store, two ducks and a fine guse, at which there was great rejoicynge.

Three menne still were to come home, and their comrades dyd look for them anxiously, fearing they had been taken by ye menne of Murdach, Sheriff of Nottingham, but in tyme they came back bringing three gret pikes, which they had snared in the river, beside gret store of perch, which they had netted without asking leve of anney manne.

Guards were sette to the right and left of the campe, and fires y'made, at which were dressed gret diversitie of dishes, and atte duske the feaste was spread in ye barne. It was a feaste that woulde have graced the Refectory of Crowlande Abbey, albeit it was served uppe in a somewhat rough manner.

Fish, fleshe, and fowle of all kinds were there, and cyder and ale in plentie, so that each manne dyd eat and quaff and sing and laugh, till he coulde no more.

Then dyd they sitte and laye around the bigge fire and tell stories of their deeds, which dyd shock mine ears exceedingly.

By the fyrelight they dyd look a very desperate sett of menne, ye more so when they had drunken of the goode rede wine, which Robyn had caused to be broached.

Robyns nose grew redder as he dranke, and hys eyen being black he dyd look most curious. Lytell John dyd have hys jawes in a slyng, as hys cheeke was some deal painful after his toothe hauling. My yeoman, Robert Baldrow, whose cheekes hade been shot through, was a silent manne, for his mouth was bounden in a clothe through a hole in which he dyd suck up some brothe through a hollow bunke.

Howbeit, for these lytell drawbacks, each man dyd enjoy himself greatly, and dyd sing or daunce according as he was him capable, and ye merriment was kept up for a gret many houres till many dyd drink themselves to sleep, and their comrades dyd cover them with deer skins and bracken, for fear they might be frcesed, so colde was ye night.

"Not oft," sayd Allan-a-dale to me, "do we have these galas, onlie now and again, else myght the crewel Sheriff of Nottingham worke us some ill."

For several dayes more dyd Robyn keep me hys prisoner, and on onne day I dyd see some of their famous archerie.

On New Yeres Day, Robyn, Lytell John and Scadlocke, had matched themselves to strike as many arrows into a marke as any six of their comrades. Thys wager was accepted by Much, Greneleaf, Allan-a-dale, my man Thomas à Boston, Reginauld Foxe, and one they called "Humpty" from his crooked backe.

A hare skin was stretched on a hoope of wode and placed as a pryke for them to shote at, at a distance of eighte score yardes, and each manne was to shote a score of arrowes at ye marke.

Robyn, Lytell John, and Scadlocke dyd shote first, and of their three score arrows, a score and seventeen

dyd stryke the marke, though Robyn dyd not schote well, hys nose being as bigge as two, and was in hys way when he dyd schote, so that but ten of his arrowes of the full score dyd strike ye mark.

Then dyd Much and his menne in turn shote at ye marke, and of alle their six score arrowes, two score and three dyd pierce ye skyn, whereat there was much shoutynge and laughing by those who dyd behold, and Robyn dyd look him ruefully to see ye prize, which was a flagon of yelow wine, drunk by lytell Much and hys men.

On the 2nd of January, my yeoman being recovered of his woundes, Robyn dyd give me leve for to goe on my waye. Whereon I dyd thanke hym and ask for my gear, at whych he dyd laugh him outrighte in my face.

"Nay, Master Monk," sayd he, "ye traveller must paye for hys fayre. Have I not kept you and two menne and alle your mules these ten days? Come quit thee hence, and thy gear I will keep in payment for thy victuals and bedde.

"Come, begone! and a right pleasaunt journey to you!"

But I woulde not thus be putten offe, and dyd trye with my menne to bringe forth the bayles of clothe from the caves, but the robbers tooke them from us, giving us many cuffes and kickes for oure pains. Anon I demanded my mules, but Robyn dyd say :

"Nay, brother, I have keeped ye mules for ten days for thee, and now I will keepe them longer for mine owne use. Dere meate may become scarce, then will mule meate be plentie."

Then I dyd try and seize ye rascal by his ears, to give him som chastisement, for we monkes be manie of us strong menne, being used to much huntinge and hawkinge arounde our monasteries.

Thereupon dyd the giant Lytell John scize me and my men, and bynde us face downwardes on our mules, and with many stripes of their bowes and quarter-staves, they dyd beat us on ye uppermoste parts till we dyd fairlie crye oute for mercie.

Then dyd Robyn say—

“I doe gif you a present each of a mule. Commende me to your good master the Abbot, and begge hym to give us hys company in the merrie Maye dayes, and he shall meet with cheer over and above that which you have received. Fare ye welle.”

Then the robbers dyd thwacke us again, tyll Robert Baldrow dyd slyp from hys mule by ye breakynge of hys strappes, and dyd begge Robyn to allow hym to remain and become one of hys menne.

Atte which Robyn dyd laugh and give hys consent right readilie, striking hym on ye backe with hys palm to shewe hys pleasure thereat.

In three dayes we dyd return us to Crowlande Abbey, hungry nigh untoe dethe, and sore ; where being kindlie entreated we dyd recover, and in the quiet of mine owne cell, I have written thys parchment to cleare my character of guilt.

Shoulde ever I com across that rascal robber, Robyn Hode, I will soe bange hys carcasse with my staffe, that hys skin shall be like a poke filled with odde bones.

“Syned, ROGER AYLMEY,

“Jany. 10, 1197.”

“CROWLANDE ABBEY,”

“*Marche*, 1495.

“I, John Wybourne, a monk of Crowlande Abbey, dyd fynde, in a strong chist of ye Ladye Chapelle, a document written by one Roger Aylmer in 1197, which dyd shewe how he was taken by ye thief Robyn Hode and dyd spend ten dayes with hym in Wintertyde: the sayd document being soe badlie written and so badelie spelt that I have corrected itte to conform with oure modern spellynge.

“Althoughe I have altered the wordes I have not altered the sense of the document, but merely for the sayk of our Abbey, I have set my hande to yts correction, that those who com after doe not blushe for shayme at Roger Alymer hys badde spellynge.”

My old friend the antiquarian would have me drive him to Coventry on my way thither, as he was particularly anxious that I should not miss visiting the shop at which he had made such discoveries of ancient parchments—parchments which, but for his discovery, would have gone, sooner or later, to form the heads of children's toy drums.

I cannot refrain from mentioning one little incident which took place before we parted. My friend, in showing me the lions of Coventry, took me into the Public Hall, where we found the old fellow in charge busy cleaning the windows. We asked permission to look round, and in speaking to the old custodian who

was on the ladder I had some difficulty in making myself understood. I said, "My friend, I am afraid, although this is a fine hall, that its acoustics are very bad."

To my surprise he gave a lengthy sniff and replied, "I don't know about that, sir, I've never had a complaint before, *I can't smell anything!*"

I did not smile, but passed out quickly, for fear of an attack of apoplexy.

In travelling from place to place I come across some strange incidents, some of which are merely the outcome of simplicity or kindness of heart.

Thus at one village I visited, I happened to mention to the landlord of the inn I was staying at that I had omitted to pack a tooth-brush with my other impedimenta.

"Oh, I'll soon set that right," he replied, and darting from the room quickly returned with a face beaming with pleasure.

"Here's one, sir," and he held out a tooth-brush; "you'll find it's a very good one, for *I've only used it a few times!*"

Simplicity of manner frequently runs hand in hand with simplicity of speech; as an illustration of the latter I may give a few words I once heard delivered from the pulpit of a Primitive Methodist chapel, by a good-natured, but somewhat illiterate preacher. He said—

"My dear frinds, coming to worshup this mornin', I had a curious idea come inter my head. I likened this chapel to a gret iron biler, and you, my frinds, I likened to the dumplin's a-being biled, while I was the long wooden spune a-stirring on yer up! There, my dear

frinds, them were my thoughts when I was a-walking here this werry mornin'."

What could be more graphic than such a charming and flattering discourse? There could be no comparison between Cicero and this village Hampden !

VII.

INTRODUCTION TO "ECCLES OLD TOWER."

YOU must know, gentle reader, that at Eccles, a village of about a score inhabitants, on the Norfolk coast, midway between Yarmouth and Cromer, stands an old church tower. It is quite upon the beach, so that at spring tides the "send" of the waves comes round the base of the old flint tower, which must at some day, not far distant,* fall with a mighty crash, a prey to the undermining and gnawing of the hungry sea, which in its insatiable encroachment annually devours hundreds of tons of the soft clay cliff, which at no point reaches a very formidable height.

North and south of Eccles the cliffs give place to sand dunes, or, as they are locally called, "Marram banks," which are kept in repair by a tax levied on all the villages between Norwich and the sea, a distance of nearly twenty miles. Norwich itself also contributes its quota, as if the sea once broke through the banks it

* Eccles Steeple fell during a tremendous gale on January 23rd, 1895, and but little remains of the huge pile except portions of the larger fragments which are still unburied by the sand.

would, by ditch, marsh, and river, run quite up to the ancient city, and submerge the portion which is contiguous to the river Wensum.

The steeple at Eccles (or as it is called locally, and by the thousands of mariners who know it as a landmark, Eccles Old Tower) stands just above high-water mark, on the beautiful firm sands, for which the Norfolk coast is unsurpassed. It is of flintwork, the lower part being "knapped," or dressed, and the upper part of the natural flint. It is a circular tower with an octagonal upper chamber, but it is roofless, doorless, and windowless, excepting that the apertures, greatly decayed, still remain. The walls of the tower are unusually massive, and the whole structure rises to an altitude of nearly seventy feet.

The body of the church was pulled down about 1603, being then in such a bad state of repair that it was dangerous to passers-by; in fact, one wall was actually blown down in a gale, and the other razed to prevent an accident.

The foundations of the church still exist, but buried in the sand. It was a small church (the nave being only some sixty feet long), and as its remains are occasionally laid bare, the writer has had opportunities of measuring the various dimensions. Although these dimensions might be interesting to an ecclesiologist or or archæologist, they would be wearisome to our readers, as they have nothing whatever to do with the story.

Round the huge fragments of the recumbent walls may be seen, after a visit from a heavy north-west gale, the foundations of the cottages which once formed the village. Cottage walls, out-houses, filled-up wells, fruit-tree roots, etc., are to be seen in all directions, and now

and then, at rare intervals, a few coins and curiosities are picked up. When the ruins *are* laid bare, the place forms what might aptly be termed the Norfolk Pompeii.

It was while I was sketching the old tower, one autumn day, that I came upon a fisherman employed in breaking up some wreckage which had been washed ashore. The timber being full of old bolts, and consisting mainly of twisted, gnarled oak knees, was of no value save for firewood, otherwise it would have been in the hands of the coastguard. He was a very civil but reticent fellow, and I could not get a yarn out of him by any means without exerting my hypnotic power, which I did, obtaining, as a result, the following wild story.

ECCLES OLD TOWER.

I AM only a plain fisherman, with but little book learning; but I think I can muster up enough form o' speech to tell you one of the skeeriest tales you ever heard in all your born days.

It was the first week in January, 188—, that we had a dreadful gale from the north-west which came at the full moon; consequently the tides were high, and this here gale came with such a scouring force, that the soft cliffs melted away like a lump of butter in the glare o' the sun. The sand was swep' away right down to what you might term the foundations of the shore, and everything laid as bare as my forehead. I liken it to my forehead, which is kinder wrinkly, because there were great ruts and scars along the beach which had once been holls,¹ decks,² and lokes.³

I and a mate o' mine walked along the beach next day, just to see if anything had been thrown ashore that would come in handy to a couple of poor chaps like ourselves; but little did we find, for some one had been pawkin'⁴ before us. Still, we got a useful length of two-inch rope and a couple of dantos,⁵ attached to a score fathom of decent net, so our walk paid for shoe-leather.

When we got to the third breakwater—for we live at Hasbro'—and peeped over, we were wholly stammed⁶ to see the old village of Eccles laid bare and plain like a map. There was the walls of the housen standin' up two foot and more in some places; and some of the door thresholds were still there, with the wood as good as ever. We could make out the shapes of the gardens, and could see where the fruit-trees had once stood, by the roots and tree-bolls that still remained.

In grubbing about with a pointed boat-streak, I roused out an old leathern bag with a golden guinea in it, and a piece of rusty iron tangled in the strap, which might have been a knife or somethin' of the sort in days gone by.

Afterwards we looked over the churchyard wall, and to our surprise found that many of the graves had been washed open; in fact, some of the coffins lay there nearly level with the ground, for you know we don't bury very deep in Norfolk, not more than four foot, and only one corpse in each hole.

The coffins wor of a different shape to what they make 'em now-a-days, for they were long, like a seaman's chest, but broad at one end and narrow at the other, and the lid hinged on at one side.

Human bones were washing about in all directions, and a long line of them lay among the rubbish left at high watermark. We found one immense coffin near the north wall of the church, which must have been seven foot long, if it was an inch. The lid was much decayed, and in some parts broken away; so we thought it no sin to prize the rest off, and see what was inside.

It was level full of sand, but when we scooped some of it out with our hands, we came upon the perfect skelington of a man, black with age, but nothing missing. It looked as if he might have been the giant Goliath that we read of in the Bible. He was no use to us, so we covered him up decent like, and as it was getting towards dark we took ourselves home agin.

Next day I borrowed old Garrod's dickey,⁷ and rode up to Stalham, and called on old Dr. Rix, for he was what some folks call a aquarian, or somethin' o' that sort, and showed him my guinea in the bag, and the old bit o' steel; and he gave me just what I asked him for 'em, and that was two-and-twenty shillings: he was pleased, and so was I, for it was just as much as I could earn in a fortnight. I stopped at his some time goldering⁸ about what I had seen at Eccles, and he up and told me, when I mentioned about the big skelington, that if I could bring it to him *intack*—that's not broken or any bits lost—he'd give me a five-pound note.

Lor, I wor soon home agen, I made the old dickey fly as if the Old 'un were arter us. Thinks I, this ought to be a single-handed job, and if I take a big poke⁹ and go alone, I shan't have any one to dole¹⁰ out halves to. So I got my spade and a lantern, a poke, and a fairish

thumb-piece of bacon and bread, and everything else I wanted all ready, and then waited till near midnight, so that I knew the coast would be clear for the job.

It was a thick, starless night, with great grey snow-clouds rolling about overhead, and the wind from the north-east was a regular marrer-freezer, and I can't say I much cared for the work in hand ; but, as the parson said when he went on a slide, "it's foolish to turn back," so on I went. The road was frozen right nubbly, and made me wobble about a bit, but by the time I got to the beach I was warm and comfortable, and got along more comfortable-like on the frozen sand, which was covered with snow in the hollows. The sand and foam from seaward was a bit unpleasant, but I didn't trouble much about that, for my thoughts were a mile ahead, with the skelington waiting for me at Eccles.

I had walked about half-a-mile along the beach, when down came the snow, wreathing and tearing about all mander¹¹ of ways, and every now and then I got into the centre of a whirl that pulled me up short, and nearly took my breath away. This only lasted a few minutes, and then the squall cleared off as suddenly as it came on, and I got on much faster with my journey.

I passed the first and then the second breakwater, and by the light that the sea always gives, I was picking my way along very nicely, when, what should I see, but some one a-coming towards me along the beach. I had not lighted my lantern, as I only wanted that for my actual work, so it was possible the man approaching might not have caught sight of me, and as I did not want to be seen by any one at that time of night, especially by a coastguard, I dropped quietly on the

sand in a hollow, in hopes that whoever it was might pass me by.

Down I went on my stummick, but kept my eyes on the man approaching, and found to my surprise that he was dressed in very light clothes; not a coastguard, I thought, at all events.

Closer he came, and then I began for some reason or other to dudder¹² and tremble, but I can't tell why, perhaps it was the cold; anyway, there was nothing I could see in the stranger that should fright me; that is to say, not just then, when I felt the first symptoms.

But presently, when he came closer, I had some cause to shake, for what I saw was a man in a long white smock, which blew out in the wind behind him as he stalked along. The nearer he came the worse I felt, for he seemed to grow taller and taller every step he took.

Would he pass me?

Yes!

No!!

No, up he came, right straight to me, and I felt like fainting—or what I should fancy fainting was like, for I have never experienced it. When he came close, I could not have stood on my feet for the value of Norwich Castle; I was right terrified, although the man had not even spoke a word.

As I looked up he towered above me like a lugger's mast, and his great bare legs were right against me. I panted, for I could not speak, but presently, in a foreign sort of voice, the figure said—

“Hullo, my friendt, anything amiss?”

I looked at him again and my fear fled, for I immediately took him to be a shipwrecked mariner, cast ashore in his sleeping gear from some vessel.

My strength at once returned, and I stood upon my feet ; but although five feet eight in my socks, and weighing fourteen stone in my oil-frock, I was only a baby by the side of my visitor, whose shoulder was more than level with the top of my head. This did not frighten me much, but when I looked at his eyes—Oh, lor ! I thought I should have dropped on all fours again.

His eyes were red and glowing like the port-light of a ship, and when he spoke, the inside of his mouth seemed to reflect a fire, which must have been raging in his internal regions.

I felt real bad, but could not keep my eyes off that huge face, with its flaming eyes and mouth, and I vowed I would never come out, single-handed, skelington-hunting again—no, not for the whole R'yle Mint.

“ Mine friendt,” said the giant, “ you are just de man I wandt der see ; you haf a spade. You come mit me to Eccles ? ”

Would I ? Could I say no ?

I went.

We had but half-a-mile to walk, and that in a biting east wind, varied with still more piercing squalls of snow and sleet, and I trembled in every limb, while my heart rattled on like a donkey-engine getting in a chain cable—all bumps and thumps.

I looked at the marrams,¹³ and calculated what chance I should have if I tried leg-bail ; but when I looked at the length of my companion, I gave it up as onpractical.

I was cold, although in what we call about here a “ muck swat,” but my new friend was all of a glow (especially about the mouth). He would have made a rare fiery speaker for the House of Commons ; he would

have frightened them that he couldn't convince by his speechifying.

His conversation was dreadful—I don't mean perfane or rude-like, but the things that man told me made my flesh creep on my bones. He wanted to make out to me that he had been buried three hundred years, just before the old church was pulled down!

I can swallow a pretty thick strand of a yarn, but this here fellow wanted me to swallow a whole cable, for he went on to tell me how, in 1584, he came over from Harlingen to Yarmouth, in a fishing-boat of which he was mate, and that while ashore he one day fell in with three or four fellows who were kinder interfering with a good-looking young girl. Being strong he went for the whole set of them, and got the girl away, but one of the gang struck him a blow with a heavy stick and broke his arm.

The girl's father came up and thanked the young Dutchman, and finding that his daughter's protector had broken a limb and could not work for a week or two, took him to a surgeon and had the limb set. He left him with the onderstanding that Dutchy would come and spend a week with them, when the doctor had finished with him. The old fellow was a farmer at Eccles, and being market-day, had as usual brought his daughter with him to Yarmouth.

Well, up to there was what the play actors would call Act One, and that was all very nice and proper, but just you listen, and you'll see how it will turn out.

By and by away goes the young Dutchman to Eccles, and of course he naturally fell in love with the mawther.¹⁴ But she wouldn't have him at no price. No, she thanked

him, and tried all she could to make him comfortable, but—she already had a sweetheart.

This staggered Dutchy, but he had no idea of letting her go so easily, and as every one in the village was afraid of the giant, the girl's father ordered the banns to be put up, to make sure that his neighbour's son should not be frightened out of his rights.

Dutchy tried all he knew to get the girl to alter her mind for a whole week ; and finding it in vain, he one morning disappeared.

That was what you might term Act Two. So far it had been all comedy, as the play-actors call it, but the last act was a violent and vicious one, as you shall hear.

The wedding-day came ; the villagers flocked to the church ; the ceremony took place ; the bells rang out ; and, according to our custom, the people fired their guns over the heads of the happy couple as they came out of the porch, on their way to the home of the bride's father.

All was perfect joy, but in another moment the joy was turned to horror, for as the young couple came from the north porch, and turned into the pathway leading round the foot of the old tower, a huge figure (it was Dutchy) sprang upon them, and like a flash of lightning struck them dead to the earth, before a hand could be raised to prevent it. The reeking knife he calmly wiped, and thrust into his waist-belt, and then stood glowering at the crowd, who kept at a very respectable distance from him. He told them of the hard-heartedness of the girl, and denounced her as she lay dead before him as an unfeeling creature, and bade them know that what he had

done was his mode of revenge, or as he called it—Justice.

But where was the bride's father all this time?

Well, he had been busy, as you shall hear.

It is the custom of we Norfolkers to give what we call "largesses"¹⁵ at marriages, comings of age, and such-like; and on this occasion the old man had pervided hisself with a little leather poke filled with small silver coins, to throw among the assembled crowd, and indeed he was occerpied in so doing when the death of his daughter took place. He knew it was no use going for Dutchy single-handed, so he just stepped behind the porch and loaded his gun with a handful of silver groats, and when it was done sprang out, just when the giant had finished his speech, and was turning to leave the place unmolested by the onlookers.

The old man shouted to him to stay or he would shoot; but, grasping the knife in his belt, the young fellow walked away, without taking any notice; where-upon the old man rushed after him, and aiming at his head, fired.

"Der oldt man did shoot mit der gun right tro mine neck, and I seize him, and gif him fon stap mit my knife, and den I vas dedt mineself," were the words of my uncanny companion.

Whether he killed the old man I cannot say, but he himself was killed, and all this three hundred years ago!

And this was the gentleman I was taking a walk with, much against my will, at night's-noon, as we say.

But then he went on with a lot more strange talk, about how he had a kind of holiday, or as we say frolic-time, 'lowanced out to him once every hundred

years, on the annewersery of the day when all this piece of work took place ; only he was not let loose, so to speak, till midnight, and then for only three hours.

Well, I'd heard some tough uns before, and didn't mind what I had heard ; but them eyes!—when I looked up at his face they bowled me over altogether. He was no mortal, that I could take my davy on.

For a little Dutchy walked in silence, and I found *my* tongue and asked him if he didn't fare cold, seeing he only had a kind of shirt on !

He turned his eyes upon me, and then I saw I had made a mistake in asking such a question ; fancy what a silly thing to ask a chap with a furnace in his innards. But he was not put out at my question, and volunteered a explanation, as the saying is.

He opened his mouth and asked me to look into it. Well, if I live to be as old as our neighbour Ives, and she is a hundred and three, I shall never forget the sight. He blazed internally like a dustpan of live coal, and the sight made my knees quiver, as if the heat of his breath had melted my marrer, or whatever it is holds a fellow right up. I've heard tell of men's hearts waxing faint, and I do believe that that night my bones were no better than wax, for hold my frame up straight I could not, however I tried, and I am not reckoned a coward when any job is on hand that wants a steady nerve and strong hand ; and I've been out on the sea some rum wather too, but the sight down this fellow's throat done me entirely.

When he had shown me his furnace below, he went on to tell me that what I had seen was the sin burning within him, and it could only be quenched by the forgiveness of the girl he killed three hundred years ago.

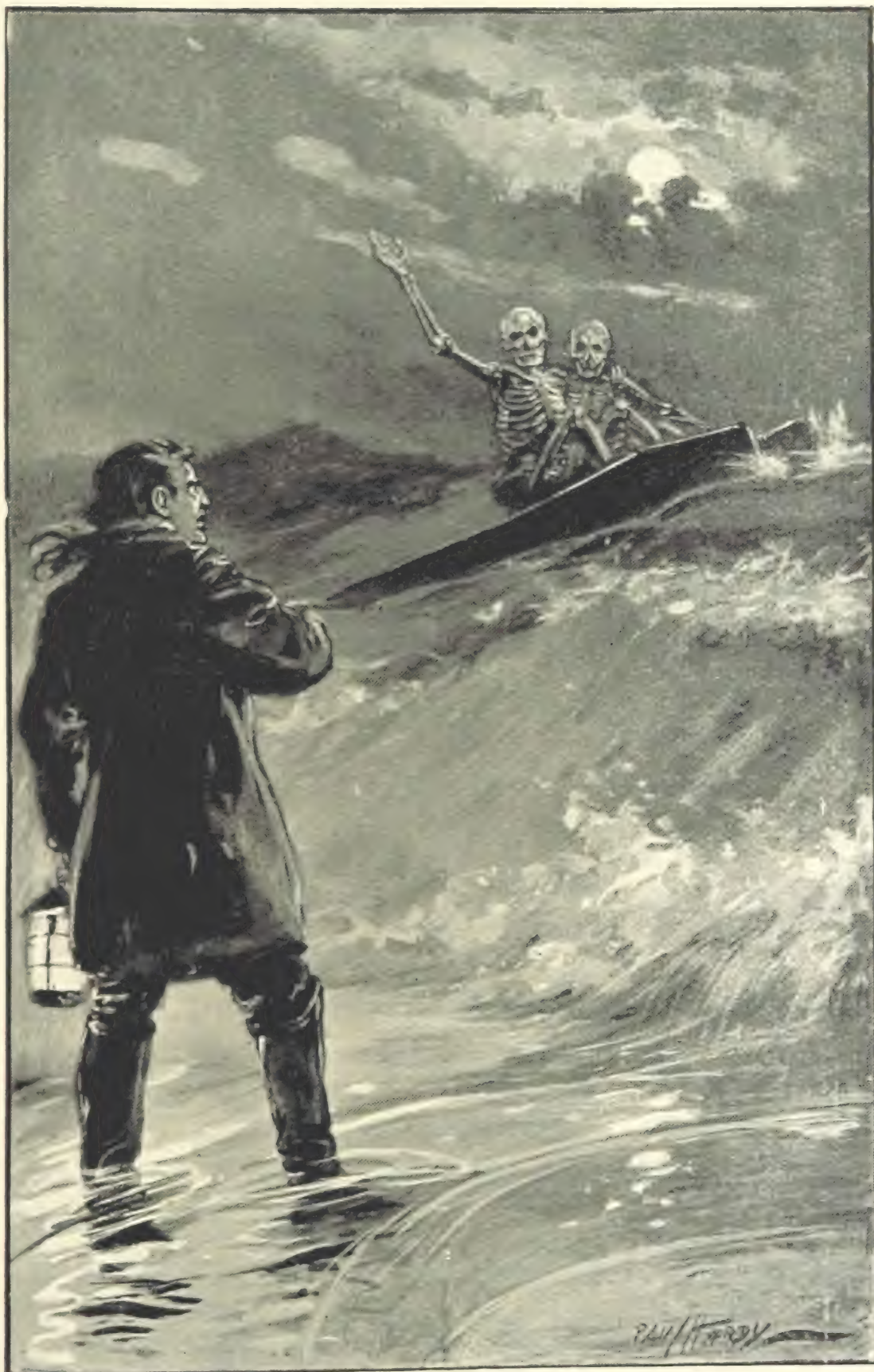
Well, of course I could not say that that was all fudge, though I could not believe him, but the funny part of it was, that when we got to Eccles Old Tower there sat a young woman on the ruins of the porch in a kind of night-shirt, as if she was waiting for us. That of course showed me that there was some truth in what Dutchy had been telling me, and when I nodded to the young woman, she gave me a very pretty smile, and said she was glad to see me, and that now I had come matters might be set right, and they could obtain a little rest.

Then she chatted on and told me that she had for a long time forgiven Dutchy, knowing that he had that within him that must have burnt away all sin long ago, but that without a mortal witness she could not forgive him, as the sin had taken place on earth. She owned that it was her cruel conduct that had brought on the Dutchman's revenge, and now before me as witness she would forgive him, and seal the forgiveness with a kiss.

Lors me! when they kissed I thought the poor man would have been blowed to pieces, for he exploded intarnilly with a tremenjous report, and the flames shot out of his mouth, ears, and eyes like rockets, and went wizzing away in streaks right over the marrams, where they were soon swallowed up in the dark and thick air.

Now my legs did give way, and down I went with my back agen the church wall, and although I was spellbound, I could see and hear all that went on before me.

Dutchy, whose eyes and mouth no longer shone, snatched up my lantern, stooped over me, and took



“By the sheen of the foam I beheld two skelingtons sitting in their coffins.”—p. 157.

my brass box of matches and struck a light, then seizing the spade, he set to work, and very soon had the huge coffin out of the sand. But the strange thing about it was, that it was the very one I had come to rob, only now there were no bones in it, and it dawned upon my stupid brain that Dutchy and the skelington was one! Where he got his flesh and shirt from goodness only knows.

The young woman, who was very pretty and had long hair down her back, which blew out like a ship's pennant in the gale, helped the giant by holding the lantern, while he did the work.

The big coffin being placed above ground, away they went round to the other side of the church, where Dutchy set to work digging again, and after a little while cleared the second coffin, which I reckon belonged to the girl.

While this was going on I had raised myself on to my marrer-bones, and with my fingers hooked over the old church wall was taking a view of all their doings, and no doubt I was all eyes and mouth if any one could have seen me.

Presently the giant up-ended the big coffin and got it on his shoulder, and as he and the girl came round by the tower, she stopped and actually asked for another kiss. Such a request took my breath away, and to avoid the awful dullor¹⁶ which I expected would follow, put my fingers into my ears, but, would you believe me, it was as human a kiss as ever you saw, and not even a whiff of smoke appeared, let alone a tongue of flame, when their lips met.

He also carried the little coffin down to the water's edge, and then up he came, and dragged the big one

down by the side of it, and there they lay, for all the world like two boats.

Then back they came right to where I was, a-cowering by the flint wall, and says Dutchy—

“Tank you werry much for der lantern and der spade,” and he held out his great hand as he added, “Farewell.”

I was very loath, but I took it, and as true as I am alive, it felt damp and cold like the hand of a dead man, and sent a thrill along my backbone I shall never forget.

Then the young woman came forward and thanked me, and put forth *her* hand for me to shake, and I shook something very like a fish, but did not shudder quite so much, as I was a bit more used to it after the first shock, so to speak.

After that they walked down to their coffins and each got into the right one, and as I did not follow too close, Dutchy turned round and beckoned me to him, and with fear and trembling I obeyed, and tottered down to the water's edge.

“Now, mynheer,” said he, “when you see der change kom, push der boads off.”

I had no idea what he meant, but I shuddered out a kind of “Yes,” and there they sat, till presently he cried out—

“Now den, push away!”

As he spoke, I floated them off, and they appeared to melt partly away, and to change colour from the pinky tinge of life to the grey of death.

They floated: and by the sheen of the foam I beheld two skelingtons sitting in their coffins, scudding against wind and tide right out to sea, slashing

through the great breakers as if they had no more weight or power than mists.

Dutchy's skelington arm was round where his companion's waist ought to have been, when I last saw them, as they burst through a big old roller that would have sunk a billyboy schooner.

Where they were bound for goodness only knows; neither do I care. All I know is, that I got home some time or other, for when I woke up the week after, they told me I was better, and that I had had brain fever.

When I got well, I went to Eccles to see if what I had got into my brainpan was all moonshine or no, but if you'll believe my word, the two coffins I had seen dug up by Dutchy were gone sure enough, which I take it proves my story to be ker-rect.

My nautical friend, on leaving my van, had not the remotest notion that he had told me a story, and as to my being able to send him to sleep, why he simply laughed at such a thing as an impossibility.

In his normal condition I tried in vain to draw him out to spin a yarn, but although he owned that he knew some "real rum 'uns," I could not prevail on him to tell me one. He merely sat and smoked, and did little more than carry on a disjointed monosyllabic conversation.

"Why will you not spin me a yarn, my friend?" I asked.

"Why, sir, you see," said he, "I ain't no scholard, and although I may *think* a great deal, I'm no sort o'

hand at *talking*. I never could frame¹⁷ enough to tell anything in a kinder pretty way like some folks. No, sir, you don't ketch me opening my mouth to be papered [put in print] for gentlefolks to laugh and make game of me."

That being so, I had no alternative but to make him a victim, with the result chronicled above.

EXPLANATION OF NORFOLK WORDS.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. holl, <i>a ditch.</i> | 10. dole, <i>a share.</i> |
| 2. deek, <i>a hedge-bank.</i> | 11. mander, <i>manner.</i> |
| 3. loke, <i>a lane.</i> | 12. dudder, <i>to shiver.</i> |
| 4. pawkin, <i>hunting for wreckage.</i> | 13. marrams, <i>grass-covered sand-</i> |
| 5. danto, <i>a fishing-buoy.</i> | <i>hills.</i> |
| 6. stammed, <i>astonished.</i> | 14. mawther, <i>a maid, a young girl.</i> |
| 7. dickey, <i>a donkey.</i> | 15. largesse, <i>a gift.</i> |
| 8. goldering, <i>chatting.</i> | 16. dullor, <i>a distracting noise.</i> |
| 9. poke, <i>a bag or sack.</i> | 17. frame, <i>to use big words.</i> |

VIII.

INTRODUCTION TO "THE MONK'S PENANCE."

I HAVE a friend who is a well-known ecclesiastic glass-painter, and who, as a relaxation, delights in gardening ; consequently he lives just out of London, so as to be enabled to carry out his hobby for horticultural pursuits. To work in his London studio during four days of the week, and to reserve Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for his country life is his plan, by adopting which he is neither a countryman nor a town-dweller, but something of both : he is pleased to call himself an "Urberusticite."

Recently, when near the metropolis, I trundled my van down the North Road to his snug little villa, and spent a few days with him.

I promised if he would help me in *my* hobby, by one evening giving himself up to me as a victim, that I would help him during the day with his garden. And I *did* help him, till every bone in my body ached with the unusual exertion of digging, and wheeling gravel in a great barrow. He gave me the hardest work he could possibly find, observing, as he saw the perspiration

streaming down my face, that "you will feel quite another man to-morrow." And so I did, for I was so stiff next morning that I could scarcely raise my hands to my head, to comb my tawny locks. After the toil of the day I was quite prepared for dinner that evening, but when the meal had been eaten with keen appetite—for gardening certainly does create havoc among the dishes—I prepared for my revenge.

My friend was quite prepared to give me an opportunity of hypnotizing him, *if I could*; but he laughed at the absurdity of the idea, believing it, as he said, all moonshine, and asserting that he could, by exerting his will against mine, prevent my passes having any power over him.

I commenced operations upon him, and to my very great surprise signally failed. All I could do was to produce a drowsy feeling in him, and at length I gave it up for the evening, conjecturing that the manual labour which I had undergone during the day had tired and weakened my hypnotic powers. My friend was delighted at the failure, and laughed very heartily at my discomfiture; declaring that the hypnotic power I exercised was only efficacious in the case of young people and old women, who had no power of brain to withstand my passes, but simply gave themselves up to my wishes or will, like so many automata.

He was good enough, however, to give me another trial next evening, and that I might not be tired he sent me to the river, at a short distance from the house, to fish and—get back my "vanished will." I was very much piqued, but dare not show it, for my friend is a very demon at sarcasm; so with rod and line I wandered off, and spent a quiet day, reserving all my

brain energies for the coming mental fray in the evening.

In the evening, dinner being over, my friend signified his readiness to commence, by making idiotic passes at the portraits hanging round the room, and appeared to imagine that to hypnotize him was a thing not to be accomplished, at least not by *my* humble powers. So certain was he that I should fail, that he was willing to do anything but give up his will to me. He made fun of my idea of obtaining a story from him, even if I *could* put him to "bye-bye," as he expressed it ; and if I did make him ass enough to divulge anything like a story, I should tell it when or where I liked, or even publish it for the delectation of the public ; but, as he assured me he did not know a story, he could not see how I was going to make him tell one.

All being ready, we commenced our little *séance*, and in two minutes my victim was in a trance state. In spite of his bumptiousness and disbelief in my powers, and in hypnotism generally, he related the following very curious experience in his own career.

THE MONK'S PENANCE.

THE profession of glass-painting is not exactly a precarious one, but, unlike many others, it has neither season nor certainty with it. People do not usually die to order, consequently, as Death hurls his dart at irregular intervals, a glass-painter is at one time quite idle, while at other periods, when he least expects it, the commissions roll in "thick and threefold." He cannot spread his work out over the year as a mother applies

jam to the bread of her eager-mouthed offspring; but when certain work has to be done, the painter has to stick to his task early and late, or the glass would stand in danger of becoming "ancient" before it could be inserted in the church for which it is intended.

Very well; just at the time the curious incident happened which I will endeavour to relate, I was busy, very busy, and working in my studio from nine in the morning till nearly midnight. I was restoring a large window—the east window of H—— Church, Yorkshire—and had been requested to have it finished and fixed again for the re-opening ceremony on Christmas Day.

It was a late fourteenth-century window, of rare beauty both in colour and workmanship, and contained many quaintly-drawn figures of saints and martyrs of all ages. Among them was one figure on which a greater amount of care had evidently been bestowed than upon any of the others, especially in regard to the painting of the face, which was probably a portrait.

The figure to which I wish to draw attention was that of a Dominican friar, habited in the garb of his order, black and white in colour, which made a fine contrast to the ruby background on which the monk was placed in the window.

This "light," as the panel is technically called, was in a very bad state of repair, and as one of my assistants passed through my studio on his way home, for he had finished his day's work, he remarked that a very little shaking would cause the old monk to fall from the lead-work and demolish himself. To which I replied by asking him to make it his first care in the morning to relead the figure, and thus render it secure for a few more

generations, as such fine figures were not very frequently seen.

At eight o'clock I was left alone in the studio, as I had determined to work on till midnight, and get my painting well forward for "firing" (burning in the vitreous colours). Somehow I can always do a vast deal more work when alone than when others are present, however quiet they may be in their movements. There is in solitude nothing to distract the attention, and one rapidly becomes absorbed in one's work, which is more expeditiously and accurately executed.

Ten o'clock came, and I prepared myself a cup of *café au lait*, and smoked a cigarette. I cannot smoke and work at the same time, as many artists have the knack of doing—for either my attention is more on my cigarette than on my work (which is a loss of time), or I become so engrossed with my painting that the paper cylinder is forgotten, and goes out, necessitating frequent and irritating relightings.

As I puffed my little white tube of Dubec, I could not help taking another look at the monk in all his glossy rigidity, and the thought came into my head that being an ecclesiastic of the fifteenth century, it was just possible that the monk so carefully delineated was a portrait of the painter of the whole window!

Why not?

Who could tell?

There he hung, upon a glass screen, behind which was a gas-jet, giving sufficient light for me to be able to discern every detail of the drawing and painting of the figure. This was more apparent because the studio in which I stood was in darkness, except for the brilliant light *behind* the easel upon which I was working.

It may be well to point out that the easel used for painting glass upon is very different to the one in use by artists when painting on canvas, as it consists of two rectangular wooden frames the front one of which sustains the easel glass, upon which the various fragments of glass forming the subject in hand are fastened, by means of a kind of cement made of wax and resin. The frame immediately behind is covered with white tissue paper, a material that not only diffuses the light equally all over the subject which is being painted, but renders the otherwise bright light soft to the artist's eyes, and prevents the glare of the various pieces of coloured glass from making them ache, as they would do if a naked light were used. Thus, in painting a subject on canvas, the light is thrown upon the front of the easel, but in painting a figure for a church window the light is behind it, and passes through it to show up the transparent colours.

I sipped my coffee and admired the monk, especially his eyes, which appeared dark and lustrous and full of life, although his body was of the lay-figure order, and his hands as absurdly grotesque in pose as those of a Chinese mandarin on a tea-tray.

Then I turned my attention to the figure of St. Agnes upon my easel and painted away again in a most diligent and vigorous manner.

Eleven o'clock came, and I began to grow sleepy and to give an involuntary yawn now and again, but I had resolved to work till midnight, and work I would.

Half-past, and I was becoming still more drowsy, and for some reason a certain nervousness seemed to come over me—mental strain and long hours I suppose; but

presently I heard a sound as of glass lightly jarring against some metallic or hard substance.

I glanced round and tapped my mahl-stick upon the floor, but no mouse scurried away responsive to my sh—h—h! so I resumed work.

A little time elapsed, and again I heard the same rattle of glass; very quiet, but quite distinct; it was a sharp, bright, but subdued noise, familiar to my ear as the noise made by glass when touching another hard substance.

Again I glanced round: all was silent. Only it seemed to me that the glass monk solemnly returned my enquiring look with a gaze such as that with which the Ancient Mariner fixed the wedding guest.

Work again—then another rattle, louder than before. This time I jumped up from my seat, opened the door, thinking some one must be outside, but nothing was to be seen. I looked again at my companion, Friar Aylmer, and this time, to my astonishment, his eyes seemed to move—to blink, in fact (for probably, as a religious man, he never learned the art of winking). I approached, but the eyes were again fixed, fixed full upon me, whichever way I turned. I simply laughed at myself: of course I conjectured that the flickering gaslights in the adjoining room were playing an optical prank upon me.

I sat down and seized my brushes, determined to finish the figure of St. Agnes before I left; half-an-hour or so more and I should be ready to trot homeward to bed.

As I sat before the easel quietly whistling to keep up my courage and my spirits, the jingling of glass was once more heard, and this time such a strange

dread seized me that I was positively afraid to turn my head. Then I heard a soft footfall, and my mahlstick and brushes dropped from my palsied hands, as my hair erected itself on my head, the result of horrific terror.

Some one approached me—at my left side—and paused. I was simply petrified with fright; turned to stone, body and limbs; only my brain retained control of its natural functions.

I knew, although I could not look, that the painted monk stood at my side!

A long pause, in which I could hear my heart beating audibly, and then a fine, mellow voice at my elbow said—

“Good friend, why this fear? I am a man of peace, and would cause no harm to the least of God's creatures, much less to thee. Calm thy perturbed spirit, and, prithee, let us converse for the short time allotted me once in each century—one short hour!”

I calmed myself a little, and looked at my weird visitor. His appearance was very natural, a man of flesh and blood apparently; and he smiled benignly upon me as he toyed with the knotted ends which dangled from the thick cord bound about his waist.

He sat upon a high stool, and my eyes were riveted upon him as if I were being hypnotized by the strange visitor—indeed, so I was, for his presence held me spellbound.

With soothing words he gradually calmed me, and after a long interval, during which I several times unsuccessfully essayed to speak, I at last found utterance, and inquired who my midnight visitor might be.

“My dear friend,” replied the dreaded shade, “listen,

and I will tell you about myself; then, perhaps, you may feel inclined to give me your assistance."

"Assistance? I? How can I assist a spirit, a phantasy? I beg you leave me and return to your place in the window."

"Listen," said he, in a beautiful voice, which at once dispelled all alarm from my mind; "listen, and you will soon discover how you can be of service to me. I pray you do not interrupt, for remember I have but one short hour in which to assume my earthly form, and if in that time I cannot obtain mortal aid to release me from my leaden bonds, I am doomed to resume my form of a painted monk in yon window for yet another century. But *tempus fugit*, as the motto on the pedestal of our old sundial used to inform us, and I will not lose another instant.

"I am Friar Aylmer—the label under my feet in the window is correct, for I painted it myself, as indeed I did the whole window, and although I wrought at it for six long years, it was destined at length to become my prison, as you shall hear.

"I am not old, as you may judge from my appearance; although nearly five centuries have rolled by since my birth, I am scarcely forty."

I looked at his kindly features and bowed my assent to his assertion, knowing that stained-glass figures do not grow old when once they are permanently painted and burnt into the glass. - He proceeded—

"My father, you must know, was Prior Aylmer, of St. Benet's Abbey, Norfolk; and by some means appeared to fall into the evil ways of the sadly dissolute times in which he lived; at least he made one great slip, one that he did not try to palliate in any way, but took so to

heart, that till the end of his days he lived an exemplary life, and gained the love of all those who were under his sway in the great abbey.

“The monks used to notice that my father spent more time in the village than was compatible with his monastic life, but then, as ecclesiastics went in those days, he was a jolly fellow, and no one thought harm of his frequent absence from the duties of the monastery, till one day an event happened which set the whole brotherhood agog, and caused much scandal.

“It was a simple, but very significant event ; one so unusual, that every one was taken by surprise, so that the whole place was in a ferment of excitement.

“It happened that the porter was very late in taking down the great bars which fastened the huge, heavy, oaken outer gate ; so late indeed that several of the brethren were about at the time, and when the door swung open on its massive hinges, they saw just what the porter saw—a long osier-work basket, with a thong of parchment upon it bearing the words ‘For Father Aylmer.’

“The basket was quickly carried to the refectory and placed in the great arm-chair of the Prior, to await the arrival of that worthy to take his seat at the head of the table for the morning meal.

“It had rested there but a short time, when a noise was heard within which caused a thrill to startle the slowly-assembling monks—it was the cry of a baby !

“What was to be done ?

“Who would open the lid ?

“Should the Prior be called ?

“Whatever was best to do ? All these questions were cut short by the entrance of the Prior himself.

"Every man was immediately silent; mouths were closed, but ears and eyes were very wide open, and the question was in every one's mind—'What will he do with it?'

"He quietly opened the lid, and before all the assembly raised a baby form to view.

"That baby was myself!

"Before them all he blessed me, and in humble tones acknowledged his sin, at the same time taking an oath upon the crucifix that, till the grave closed over him, his tongue should not speak to woman more, neither should his form be seen outside the Abbey walls.

"He lived thirty-five years after this startling event, but his oath he kept inviolate, and, as I have already said, he led an exemplary life, and died beloved and respected by all men, both lay and ecclesiastic.

"I was placed in the hands of a village dame to nurse, and she, kind creature, had care of me till I was six years of age, when I was received into the monastery, and under my father's guidance instructed in the various ecclesiastic accomplishments then in vogue.

"Wood-carving, missal-painting, and finally glass-painting were taught me, and in them I soon became proficient. These things filled my time when not studying the usual routine of religious education. As a child I was a plaything for the monks, who delighted to hear me sing, some of my efforts, I am sorry to say, being far from a religious nature, and more fitted for an amorous cavalier than a budding monk.

"As I grew to man's estate, my fondness for glass-painting asserted itself; a fondness which enabled me, more than any other of my accomplishments, to beautify

the old Abbey, although some of my wood-carving, for stall ends and misereres, was considered exceptionally fine.

"As the years rolled on I filled the small aisle windows with stained glass, and this so pleased the good Abbot, that he requested me to paint the large east window of the Abbey church. I undertook the task, but it took me several years to accomplish.

"Just before the window was completed, I had the sorrow of parting with my dear father for ever. After a few days' illness he succumbed to an attack of fever, and was laid to rest in the burying-ground by the Abbey wall. My grief was so poignant that for a long time I had not the heart to finish the great east window, which now wanted but the figure of another saint to complete it.

"One night, as I lay in my little cell, the thought came into my head suddenly, 'Why not paint a figure of my dear dead father to complete the window?'

"I turned the idea over in my mind and could see no reason why it should not be so, as for many years my father had been Prior of the Abbey, second only to the great Abbot himself, and since my birth had lead a truly pious life, an example to all those who received religious instruction from his erudite brain.

"Full of love for my parent's memory, I painted the figure of a monk robed in the dress of our order, and from drawings I had made during my father's lifetime, I reproduced the features of his dear face as far as possible.

"In due time the panel was fixed in its place and the great east window was at last finished. A grand supper was given in honour of the event, at which I

was complimented upon my untiring energy and skill in having enriched the Abbey church with such a splendid work of art. The Abbot avowed it was second to none in the realm, but I was always a modest man, and took his kind words as complimentary, but nothing more ; I knew he flattered me, and blushed accordingly.

“ That night, when I retired to rest in my cell, I felt peculiarly heavy and depressed ; I ascribed the feeling, however, to reaction after the excitement of the evening.

“ I stepped into bed, but for a long time could not sleep. I simply tossed and turned about till long past midnight, when, lying with my face to the wall, I became aware of a light in the room. I looked around but could see nothing, although the small cell appeared unusually light, becoming indeed brighter and brighter, until near the door the brilliance was so dazzling, that my eyes could not bear to look upon it.

“ I sat up on my humble wooden bedstead, and endeavoured to pierce the effulgence, but instead I was forced to close my eyes, for the glare was positively blinding. Then out of the radiance of glory came a voice, which from its thrilling accents I knew belonged not to this earth, and slowly, distinctly, and musically, uttered these words of dreadful import—

“ ‘ O gifted monk, thy skill is great, though thy veneration for holy things but small ; amongst Heaven’s saints thou hast presumed to place one who, of this earth, was earthy, although doubtless dear to thee. He whose portrait is shown in the east window—who is not of the elect—shall stand in his vitreous form as a penance till *accident* doth destroy his effigy. He shall know and hear all that passes around, but except for *one hour in*

each century, shall have neither movement nor speech. Accident, not design, can alone cancel this dread sentence. Vale.'

"I sank back upon my bed trembling with fear, and pinching myself to see if I was awake or dreaming ; but I knew that I was awake, for the light still illumined the room, although it grew fainter each moment ; till, in the space of perhaps a full minute, it died quite out ; the last portion to melt away being a circular aureole or nimbus, which remained for some time after the larger blaze of light had disappeared.

"No sleep drew down my eyelids that long night, and in the morning I was so ill that I could not rise for matins, and the good Abbot came to my cell to ascertain the cause of my absence.

"'Too much wine, my son, eh ?' he good-humouredly suggested.

"'Nay, father, jest not, I pray, for I have a confession to make, if you will bid my worthy brethren depart.'

"We were quickly left alone, and the door being closed, I related to the Superior my vision of the night, at which his smiling face gradually became sedate, and even stern, as he listened to my recital of the strange apparition.

"'My son, the long hours spent in study, and the work of painting our great east window, have been too much for thy teeming brain ; thou art feverish, and require rest. Stay thou in bed for a day or two, and I will forego thee thy duties. Rest patiently, my son, and be not over thoughtful of the vision, which was probably but the hallucination of an overwrought brain.'

"'Nay, father, I need not rest, for the vision I last

night saw was no phantasy of a distraught or wearied brain, but a reality ; and it maddens me to think I may have doomed my father to a purgatory of centuries. Holy father, will you grant me one request, a simple one truly ?'

" ' Ay, my son, that will I, for thou wilt not, I know, ask aught that I may not in duty readily grant. What is it thou desirest ?'

" ' Holy father, it is but a small thing. It is that I may be allowed to take out my father's portrait from the window and paint my own in its place !'

" ' Hum ! Well, well, if you think it will ease your mind you have my dispensation to do it : one monk's head is as good as another. I will quietly give out before the brethren that as you are the painter of the window, I should rather desire *your* portrait there, instead of that of your good father. At this thou must demur, though not so pertinaciously but that I may override thy entreaties. This and more I would gladly do for thee.'

" In due course my portrait replaced that of my father, and shortly after I was taken ill with brain fever, and died on my thirty-ninth birthday.

" I was placed in a grave by the side of my father, but alas ! I did not rest there ; for when next day dawned, behold my soul and understanding faculties had entered the painted monk, and there, in the east window, for five centuries I have been cognizant of all things going on around me, but with no power of speech or movement, except for one all too brief hour every hundred years.

" In 1494 I came down from my window, and scared the brethren in the dear old Abbey, who, crossing

themselves, gabbled their Paters and Aves, and conjured me to go back to my place in the window. I did so, and then they put out all the candles, rushed from the church, and locked the door behind them. Left alone, I had not long to reflect on the awfulness of my position ; but in a short time, dreadful as it may appear, I determined to jump down from my lofty niche in the window, and endeavour to kill myself, for I had only a *few more minutes to live !*

“I ascended to my place beneath the canopy of the window, and, closing my eyes, bent forward, and hurled myself heavily to the stone floor, to try if I could break my neck, rather than live in death for another hundred years.

“Down I fell—swiftly : but my impact with the floor was as if a feather had been wafted down from the wing of some passing bird.

“I was foiled in my wicked attempt to avert my doom, and as I sat on the encaustic pavement a fiend stood by me, who, with mocking laugh and leering eye, whispered in a discordant voice in my ear—

“‘From the grid to the fire is but poor change ; from thy doom up there, to my cavern below, would not have availed thee much. I am disappointed in not taking down a monk with me, for monks seldom lay violent hands on themselves. But he ! he ! ha !—list to the rusty iron tongue of yon bell ; get thee to thy vigil ; into thy niche ; I may have thee yet. I wish thee joy of thy hundred years. Be patient, good monk !’

“I was in my niche again ere the rolling boom of the great bell had ceased to reverberate in the black vastness of night.

“1594 at length came, and this time I found myself in

the east window of St. F——'s Church, whither I had been transported soon after the Reformation. Midnight crashed out from the great bell, and I was once more free for one short, solitary hour—a mere speck in the revolution of a whole century of time.

“This time I stepped from my niche rearward into the churchyard, and made my way into the town, walking boldly into the High Street, without an idea of what I was about to do, except that I wished to find the vicar of the church in which I was incarcerated.

“I accosted two swaggering soldiers, and desired them to kindly tell me where he lived, but they, being somewhat in liquor, looked at me and then at each other, and laughed as if I had been some raree show.

“‘Come, comrade,’ said one, ‘we will show thee the vicar,’ and linking their arms in mine they dragged me through the street to the Town Hall, where, thrusting me before them, they forced me into the centre of a group of boisterous soldiers, who opened out to receive me, evidently thinking I was some Jack Pudding, masquerading in monk's attire. They bandied jests with me, and when I resented their rudeness, they only laughed the louder, taking my remonstrance as part of my performance, which they thought most excellent. Knowing my time was short, I became so angry that they at length found a mistake had been made, and I forced my way out of the throng, intending to find the vicar's house by myself, but, ere I reached the entrance door, I was hauled back into the presence of the captain of the guard, who had just entered the hall, and who leisurely proceeded to question me in a very rude and imperious manner.

“I objected; and in turn became insolent to him,

whereupon he ordered me to be locked up till morning, that I might be haled before the magistrate to give an account of myself. At this I saw my last chance of finding the vicar gone, so, seizing a large sword that lay on the table, I let drive at the nearest man to me, but he was too quick for me, and guarded my blow, in turn aiming a blow at me which, had I not parried, would have cut me in twain. I guarded the stroke involuntarily, else might my life and penance have been severed at a blow.

"Fool that I must have been: next instant I was flying through space, and before I had time to draw a single breath I was again a stained glass figure.

"1693 gave me one more brief respite from my penance, but it was again abortive, not bringing any kindly *accident* for my release. I was again revived at midnight, a most inappropriate time, as you will allow, for one to carry out any important business, such as the release of a man from centuries of purgatory. During my weary imprisonment I heard all the news of the period from the gossip of those who chose to chatter just beneath me; I knew what king reigned, what battles were fought; all the grand events that took place in England, and even all the local scandal; but nothing I heard or saw gave me the slightest interest. I was dumb but could hear; hear and understand all that was said; but not a ray of hope ever came to me in the way of a plot to blow up the church, although I heard many plots to demolish the State.

"Now and again an aimless stone struck one or other of the saints around me and fractured him or her, but never a one gave me a kindly blow, although my broad face and tonsured head gave a splendid target at which

a school urchin might have been pleased to try his skill ; but none ever did.

“On the night of my third revival a terrible storm was raging ; the lightning was flashing most vividly around the old church, and I longed for a bolt to strike me ; but I appeared to bear a charmed existence, even in the flesh, for although I sat with my back to the lightning-conductor which came down from the tower, not a spark of the current touched me, although it toppled over the upper portion of the spire, and hurled it in shivered atoms at my feet ; not a stone from the falling mass touched me, though I had designedly placed myself in the way of danger. I sat on a gravestone and pondered what I should do, but could think of nothing in the way of accident that could befriend me.

“As I sat thus, two soldiers passed by along the road, and one, on perceiving me, stopped suddenly and clutched his comrade's arm in terror, pointing his finger tremblingly at me.

“They took me for a ghost.

“Here was my chance. If they would only fire at me, and kill me, I should be absolved from my penance.

“They challenged me, but I answered never a word.

“Again they hailed.

“‘Who are you ? speak, or we will fire.’

“I stood upon tiptoe and faced them, making a weird sound with my lips that they might take me for something unearthly, and, if they had the courage, fire upon me.

“One man raised his flintlock and fired deliberately at me, and the bullet actually shore off a lock from my temple, which blew away among the rank wet grass.

"He looked surprised as I gave a loud, hollow 'ha! ha!' as apparitions and goblins are supposed to do; upon which he turned and fled, leaving his more courageous comrade to face me alone. He was a noble, brave fellow, and I blessed him as he knelt by the churchyard wall, upon the top of which he rested his gun and took deliberate aim at my breast.

"My heart throbbed for joy as I awaited the releasing leaden missile; but there was only a puff and a snap, and I knew that only a flash in the pan had resulted when the soldier drew his trigger.

"'Hang the damp powder!' I heard him say; then in a louder tone—'Hold, old Hyter sprite! I'll have at thee again; stay thee steady till I prime afresh. I'll see of what thou'rt made, and whether thou art foul fiend in priestly guise, or some hair-brained loon who would scare an old soldier who has fought the battles of his country these twenty years.'

"Then, to my dismay, as he primed his weapon with dry powder the bell rung out the hour of one, and I found myself amid the saints in the window again. I saw the soldier go and examine the tomb on which I had recently stood, and its surroundings, and then stride away after his comrade, shaking his head, and I mentally blessed him.

"A hundred years ago—in 1793—I once more gained my life for the allotted sixty minutes, and knew that in Paris the Revolution was at its height. But what did that signify to me. St. F——'s Church was not in Paris, or I might have been released unknowingly by one of the dreadful bands of ruffians to whom nothing was sacred,

"I stood in the dark old church and pondered.

"What *should* I do ?

"Where could I go ?

"What could I *do* ?

"Nothing, absolutely *nothing* ! Stay ; I would spend my time in fervent prayer, kneeling before the cross on the Holy Table, and see if that could release me from my awful doom.

"I knelt, and prayed, and wept, wringing my hands as the tears coursed down my cheeks, like burning streams of molten lava ; but as I thus knelt at my devotions the vestry door of the church opened, and two men entered, one of them bearing a lantern. They paused near the communion rails, and one (by whose attire I judged him to be the vicar) said :

" ' Now, Giles, I may have dropped it here whilst performing the evening service, and if so we should see the stone glitter by the light of the lantern ; let us look around the chancel. '

"The speaker had evidently lost a gem ring and was seeking it.

"Not knowing what to do I continued kneeling, to see what course events might take. I had not long to wait, for a sudden shrill scream, a moan, and a dull thud caused me to look round. Down the nave bounded the man who bore the lantern, yelling lustily for help, and his companion lay prone upon his face quite near me. I approached, bent over the prostrate form, and turned the body over on its back—for body only it was, the soul had fled. Happy man ! he could die and be at rest, while I, who courted death in any form, could only be—(Boom ! the bell tolled One)—a quaint, stiff, transparent figure of glass !

"And now, my dear friend (for you *will* befriend me if it is in your power, I know, after hearing my awful story) I find myself in 1893 in your studio, and to my horror hear that I am to be bound in fetters of new leadwork : a new lease, as it were, of my penance !

"My time is short ; what can you do for me ?

"How can you destroy me ?

"How *can* a catastrophe be brought about without premeditation ? How can one *think* without premeditation ?

"My friend, save me ! but five minutes remain. I cannot think, my brain is on fire.

"My dear friend, think for me, I implore you !

"Oh ! Heaven help me ; do not extend my penance till the crack of doom !

"Watch the minutes gliding by—but two remain.

"I am going mad ; mad ! and you sit there dumb, who might, by an effort of thought, be my saviour.

"*One* minute ; and then—purgatory for one hundred years !"

I looked at my guest and saw the great beads of perspiration chasing each other down his temples ; I saw his fingers writhing like serpents, clutching at the empty air ; I saw his eyes glaring upon me, and piercing me through like two arrows ; I saw him rise as if to fly at me and strangle me, and recoiled with horror at the sight of him ; but he never came a step nearer for the bell of the neighbouring church struck a big, reverberating *One !* and as the corporal figure of the monk began quickly to dissolve into its glassy form, I sprang at it not knowing what I did, and tried to grasp it, but my arms pierced through it as if it were tissue paper, and I fell headlong upon the floor, with a terrible pain

in my forehead, and as I fell I distinctly heard the words —“Joy and rest for ever; my doom is past! God in His mercy be praised!”

* * * * *

When I recovered consciousness it was 8.30 a.m., and a doctor and my assistants were round me, using various restoratives. Across my forehead was a terrible gash, which the doctor had sewn and bandaged, and at the foot of the glass screen lay the broken fragments of my visitor, the Monk.

To show that it does not always do to rely on one's own strength, either physically or mentally, I may say that not only did I obtain complete control over the will of my stained-glass artist friend, but taking him at his word, I received from his unconscious self the material for *several* capital stories; and all this from the man who could neither be hypnotized nor tell a single story! The overplus of this glass-painter's genius as a storyteller I reserve for future consideration.

IX.

INTRODUCTION TO "DOCTOR ANGUS SINCLAIR."

WHEREVER I happen to be, whether in town or at a seaport, the sight of a genuine tar has a fascination for me, and I feel bound to speak to the man, if he is at all a decent person and has a civil and clean tongue. I find that the average sailor is a very reticent fellow on first acquaintance, probably taking every landsman for a shark; and as that is his belief, he is very wary of strangers who may wish to engage him in conversation. No doubt, in ports all over the world, Jack meets with plenty of unprincipled people, ready to take advantage of him in any way that presents itself, and, knowing this, he is consequently on his guard, and in time looks with doubt upon all strangers, as possible enemies, sailing under false colours. Thus is Jack taciturn on first acquaintanceship, both at home or abroad, but when once he finds that he has a friend to deal with, his tongue is loosened and the bulkhead of cautious reserve soon battered down, and he will then fire off his jokes and yarns in a most amicable and boisterous manner.

Old John Beamish, whom I met in the port of

Aberdeen, was one of these peculiarly reserved men, carrying his character in his face, as a stout, true, hard-headed North Briton ; and it was only after several friendly "cracks" that I could at all thaw the apparently austere Captain Beamish.

The gallant skipper no doubt put me down as a bad lot, seeing that I lived in a gipsy-van, and when I informed him that I only wandered about for my own pleasure, tapped his short fat forefinger on his nose, which I took to be a sign that my statement was somewhat open to doubt. He could not conceive that any sane person, with a fair income, should live on wheels, with no permanent address, when the said income would provide "a nice snug little house, with a tidy bit of garden, a summer-house, and a tall flagstaff, for its possessor."

However, after I had persuaded the captain to pay me several visits, he came to the conclusion that I might by some chance be speaking the truth after all, and we had several pleasant evenings, which were passed in chatting, cards, and whisky. Captain John loved cribbage very much, but whisky more ; and, on one or two occasions, I had to steady him as he took his departure from my van, the step-ladder, or companion as he called it, being very steep.

When I broached the subject of hypnotism the good man was unfeignedly alarmed, and I fully believe placed my cards, whisky, and hospitality down to a bad cause. I think he expected I had been luring him on to rob him, or take some other advantage of him, and for several days I could not prevail upon him to spend another evening with me, until I informed him that I was to depart in a day or two. Then I invited him to

pay me a farewell visit. My invitation was accepted, and he came, but I very soon noticed one thing, and that was, that he had left his watch at home.

He played and drank as usual, and as the evening wore on he mellowed under the influence of "mountain dew." With each successive draught his uneasiness gradually disappeared, until he became quite communicative; and then—well then, feeling for all the world like a murderer—I added him to the number of my victims.

DOCTOR ANGUS SINCLAIR.

I HAVE—as seaman, mate, and skipper—in forty years seen some curious sights, you may be sure, although all my voyages have been to the north, ay, and pretty far north too, some of them; for we whalers have to go wherever the fish are to be found, and if we cannot find them near home, why, we have just got to go north and search till we do fall in with them.

You want to know the most wonderful thing I ever came across in my long life of hardship and adventure in the Arctic Seas? Well, there is nothing that I know of to equal the finding of Doctor Angus Sinclair in 1862. But as you want it spun properly I'll give you the yarn from beginning to end, and then you'll see for yourself what a curious adventure it was.

In 1862 I was mate of the *White Swan* whaler, sailing from the port of Dundee, and as we had made a very poor fishing during the previous season in the Greenland Sea, our skipper made up his mind to try fresh ground, and to steer north-eastward to the Spitzbergen Islands,

as he knew of some likely ground to the eastward of those islands.

The most eastern of the Spitzbergen Isles is one called Wyches, or King Charles's Island, and our skipper made straight for this island, intending to build a hut there, and make it a kind of winter habitation, should we be obliged to go into winter quarters before getting a full cargo. Our owner had instructed the skipper to take what oil he could get of the right sort, but, if he could not obtain a full cargo, to wait till he could fill up with something else—by this meaning seal-pelts, seal-oil, bear's robes, walrus' tusks or skin, or anything else worth the freight.

Having all our outfit aboard we left Dundee, touched at Tromso, and in a fortnight arrived safely at Wyches Island, where we stayed about a week to build a large and comfortable hut, with timber brought with us from Dundee. Holes were dug into the everlastingly frozen ground, and posts erected, upon the outsides of which inch boards were nailed, and afterwards upon the inside also. This formed a double skin, leaving a space of some six inches between, which was filled with sawdust tightly rammed down. The roof was made in the same way, and when it was finished the whole of the interior was lined with thick felt.

There were four double-glazed windows facing the cardinal points, and only one door facing south-west. This door was well draped in thick blanketing to keep out the cold blasts of air. Bunks were ranged round the walls, and a large stove for cooking and heating purposes stood in the centre of the floor. Round the stove, forming three sides of a square, stood deal tables, for dining and other purposes. Such was our "Swan's

Nest," as we christened it, and we afterwards found it very cosy.

Between Spitzbergen and Franz Joseph Land we cruised during the summer and autumn with fair success, but when the time came that we should for safety be sailing southward and homeward, we found that our cargo was not nearly a full one. Seeing this, the skipper had a grand "palaver" on deck, in which he did nearly all the talking, and informed the crew that he had decided to winter in White Swan Inlet; and finding that one or two of the crew were for going home and returning in the early spring, he gave them leave to do so, but also pointed out that if they were mammy sick, and wished to go home, they would have to *walk* there!

Our crew numbered forty hands all told, and a fine, jolly lot of fellows they were, living very harmoniously together, splitting up naturally into parties for fishing and shooting expeditions, when the weather would allow of it. Some of these excursions were for the benefit of our owner, as the skipper and I each headed parties to hunt bears, and to knock over a few seals now and again. At other times the parties were for the purpose of replenishing the larder, as we learnt to snare white foxes, geese, and other things of a furry or feathered nature; whatever we obtained went into the huge cauldron which always stood on the stove, *à la* the French *pot au feu*. By the way, our stove was as carefully watched as any sacred lamp in a continental cathedral, for it was never allowed to show even a symptom of going out, either by night or day.

Sometimes we would organize little exploring parties on our own account (having first obtained the skipper's

sanction), and wandered away for miles among the hills of the frozen island, thus leaving more space for those who remained at home to play their indoor games. Could any of our friends have looked into the "Swan's Nest," they might easily have mistaken it for a boys' school, or even a play-ground. Let me just give you an idea of what the inmates did to pass their time away, from notes of the scene jotted in my pocket-book on one occasion.

Two men were cooking for the general mess. The armourer was cleaning or repairing guns, knives, etc., for some projected expedition, while round the fire sat a noisy group telling yarns and smoking. Near them sat a party of four playing some game of cards ; a desperate game apparently, for they looked very solemn and absorbed. The boys were enjoying a game of leap-frog at one end of the room, while several of the bunks were occupied by men, some of whom were asleep, a couple on the sick list, and others reading. There was a man, the cobbler of the crew, mending boots, while at his side sat Snip, sewing away at the seat of a pair of duffel trousers, what he calls armour-plating them ; and along the north side was a skittle alley, at which a knot of tars are very much enjoying themselves, if we might judge by the shouts of merriment and hearty smacks upon the back with which they salute each other.

Hands behind his back by the stove, with his legs thrust apart like a pair of compasses, stood the skipper, sipping a glass of something steaming hot, while your humble servant had just finished posting up the ship's journal ; for the skipper was a poor hand with the pen, his fingers being all thumbs, and his thumbs like stun'sail booms.

Well, now that I have shown you how we amused ourselves, I will proceed with my yarn.

Ever since I was quite a nipper I have had a fondness for exploring and roaming about whenever I could get off duty, and this propensity did not desert me amid the snow and ice of the Arctic regions, as you shall hear.

I begged the skipper to allow me to make a tour of the island on which we were living; a tour having for its object the making of an accurate map; one, at any rate, more accurate than that at the time laid down in the charts.

He met me with a flat and decided "No!"

"Why, man, are you mad? The island we are on is as large as the principality of Wales, and to compass it you would have to travel at least four hundred miles, which would probably mean an absence of nine or ten weeks! No, my man, this is not *quite* a lunatic asylum; not yet, at all events."

It was no use pleading, but his refusal set my back up, as the men twitted me (not to my face, but indirectly), with wanting to be a circumnavigator of the world on my own account.

Two of them would waddle round the tables, and, when they met, pretend they had not seen each other for years, and shake hands and embrace in a most enthusiastic manner, to the delight of the crew and my own chagrin.

One day, the weather being clear, the skipper brought out his big telescope, and was very busy with it, taking long surveys at a distant island lying due south of the Inlet. He requested me to get the charts of the Spitzbergen group down, which I did.

"Now look here," said he, addressing me; "that island to the south'ard is laid down in the chart as a mere rock, and only indicated by a big dot and the words 'rocks of some extent.' Now, by my glass, it looks a tidy big island, at least six or eight miles from east to west, and goodness knows how long from north to south. I can see parts of it which must rise to a height of several hundred feet, and probably the whole island would take some three or four days to travel round on the rough ice. Now what do you say to take two or three hands and go and explore it?"

"What do I say?—why jump at it with pleasure, of course; but give me a couple of days to get ready, and allow me to pick my crew."

This was assented to, and in the three days allotted I rigged up one of the small boats on runners, loaded it with felt sleeping-bags, a tent, small stove, guns, provisions, a lamp, and many other things that might be required.

On the third day I started off with four men, who were as eager for the expedition as myself, being only too glad to undertake anything for a change from the monotonous hut life. We were granted six days to be away; if we had not returned by the end of that time a search party would be sent out to seek us. We were instructed to plant a rod with a piece of red bunting at our various halting-places, so that if necessary our steps might easily be followed.

As we started off the whole ship's company came out to bid us farewell, and it made our hearts bound with joy and pride, when we heard their voices, with loud "hurrahs," make the surrounding icy peaks of these Arctic solitudes echo again.

We had ten miles to scramble over the excessively rough ice which lay between our winter quarters and the island. Six or eight of our mates came half-way with us, to give us a hand in dragging our sledge-boat.

It was terrible hard work, and the first five miles took us six hours to accomplish, as the ice was in some places piled in hummocks twenty and even thirty feet high; round these we had to make a *détour*, so that our course was very meandering and uncertain.

We made a halt and refreshed, each of us having a cup of hot coffee to drink with the meal we had brought with us. We could see the "Swan's Nest" built on the side of a hill facing south-west, and, not a couple of hundred yards away, was our vessel, the *White Swan*, frozen solidly into the ice. Her topmasts and heavy gear had been sent down and stowed on deck, which from stem to stern was covered in with a span roof of timber; so that she looked something like a long black shed, with three tall chimneys thrust through the roof.

After half-an-hour's halt our comrades left us and returned to the "Swan's Nest," hoping to see us again in six days at furthest.

After a long and rough scramble we at length reached the island, and selecting a nook between two rocky cliffs, erected our tent and prepared everything to pass the night there. The rocks on three sides kept the wind off famously, what little there was, and to give some protection from any bears who might be prowling about, we drew the sledge across the narrow entrance to our nook; the stove we rigged up at the mouth of the tent. We cooked a kind of stew, had a pannikin of hot coffee each, and then, drawing sleeping-bags over our legs up to our waists, sat and played cards

by lantern light till we were ready for slumber, when we drew the bags completely over our heads and slept soundly till it was time to be up and stirring.

So far everything had been quiet and comfortable, but while we were consuming our breakfast, one of the men named Adams went to the boat for some more ship's bread, and was in the act of taking it from the bag in which it was kept when a huge white bear put his nose over the side of the boat and opened its mouth, just as you see them in menageries when a biscuit is about to be tossed to them. He appeared to say,

"Don't forget me, mate."

Adams, far from being frightened, stooped and picked up an axe from the floor of the boat, and swinging it aloft brought it down so as to strike the animal fairly on the head, and had he succeeded he would probably have killed it instantaneously, as he was a powerful man.

The bear was too quick for him, however, and dodged the intended blow, so that the axe, instead of being buried in the furry one's skull, found a billet in the side of the boat, where it was wedged so tightly by the force of the blow, that Adams could not withdraw it. He turned round to jump out and run to us, but the bear, rising on its hind legs, caught him a blow in the ribs which sent him with a crash into the bottom of the boat.

The bear still stood on its hind legs, roaring and looking very wicked—offering a capital mark for our rifles, three of which were aimed at the monster at the same time. Two almost simultaneous reports rang out, and the monster fell: my piece failed to go off—a bad cap I found afterwards, for breechloaders were not then in general use. We made a rush upon our fallen foe to

give him the *coup de grâce*, but the terrible fellow was quite dead, from a shot through the eye, which had doubtless penetrated the brain. Two of his claws had been carried away by the other bullet, which came very near missing altogether.

Adams lay in the bottom of the boat perfectly conscious, and looking at us, but giving occasional groans.

"Are you hurt?" we asked.

"Hurt, mates? I'm afraid to move, for fear my whole starboard side is stove in. Give us a hand, one of you; steady—gently now."

He rose with difficulty, and we carried him to the tent and examined his side. No bones were broken, but from the armpit to the waist was a terrible bruise upon which we rubbed a good coat of the bear's fat, on the principle that like cures like.

Fearing that he would be an incumbrance to us, he determined to start back to the "Swan's Nest" alone, as he could not pull on the sledge-ropes; so shouldering his rifle the plucky fellow returned across the icy wilderness, and reached our quarters safely (as we afterwards found), tired and sore in every limb, after a tramp and clamber of twelve hours.

We skinned the bear, rolling up the robe and placing it in the boat, and then commenced our tour of the island.

We had made the island on the north shore, and gradually worked round along the east coast, till we arrived at the south, where we discovered a nearly land-locked harbour of considerable extent, which we entered, finding it covered with quite smooth ice, smooth enough, in fact, for skating, which is a somewhat rare occurrence in these regions. The Ancient Mariner had

"water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," while in the far north we have ice and snow everywhere, but not a place to skate. The harbour was surrounded by steep cliffs of great height and snow-clad, but still a cosy-looking place for winter quarters for a whaler.

As we looked around these wall-like cliffs, we were startled by the sight of what appeared to be a solid-looking hut, built in a hollow, over which the great brown cliffs lowered as if they would fall and crush it. A steep, pathless, snowy slope led up to this strange dwelling, which no sooner caught sight of than, like a lot of boys just let out of school, we, with one accord, dropped our sledge-tugs and bounded up the craggy acclivity to see what it contained.

Sure enough it *was* a hut, and of fair size too, built with its rear supported by the rocky cliffs, which had been hollowed out to receive it. Two windows, heavily barred, looked out over the frozen sea below, and between them was the heavy door, from a hole in which depended a thin metal chain. I seized the chain and gave it a pull, which raised a bar of wood within, causing the door to swing open of its own accord.

We looked within, but the interior was so dark that little was visible, even with the door open; but we could see a piece of blanket or battered sail stretched from side to side of the cabin, so as to divide it into two apartments, and we could also discern a rough, ancient-looking chair, and several large articles. I stepped in and drew the curtain aside; I say *drew* it aside, but it really fell apart in my hand as I endeavoured to do so. Anyhow, enough of it was removed for me to see a most gruesome sight; for there, in the dim light, I could

dimly discern the figure of a dead man, sitting by a table or bench, and, as may be supposed, the sight made me recoil against my comrades, whom I so imbued with my fright, that we all rushed out of the hut together.

Telling them what I had seen, I sent one of them to the boat for the lantern, so that we could obtain a light, and enter again into the inner apartment of the hut.

The lantern being brought, we crowded in quietly together, I being foremost with the light, and there, sure enough, sat a man at the table in such an attitude that, had we not known he must be dead, we should have thought he was simply asleep. He looked about sixty years of age, and possessed very fine intellectual features; but on closer examination we were surprised to find that his beard, instead of being an ordinary one of, say, a few inches long, or even an extraordinary one of a growth reaching to the waist, was of such an abnormal length that it not only reached the floor, but lay there in a huge tangled mass; nor was his hair a whit behind, as it fell in tresses over the back of the chair, and was actually frozen to the floor all around him. His eyebrows, too, hung down over his eyelids touching his cheeks, and as for his finger-nails!—well, they were as long and pointed as “the quills upon the back of the fretful porcupine.” His toe-nails had pierced his shoes, and extended beyond his toes a foot or more.

We gazed in silence, being struck speechless with amazement at the marvellous sight, and for some time our eyes were so riveted on the strange object before us, that we forgot each other's presence.

My voice first broke the silence, but as I spoke my

words seemed a kind of sacrilege to the presence and awful silence and solemnity of the dead man before us.

"Well, mates, what do you make of this?" I asked.

No one knew what to make of it, but old Johnson, our carpenter, asked—

"What's that thing on the table in front of him?"

I held the lantern closer, to what appeared to be a curiously-shaped box; it was tall, and narrow, and of an octagonal form.

Drawing it towards me I raised the lid, for it was not locked, and discovered another small case within it. This I also opened, and within I found a roll of parchment, on which was clearly written in a bold black lettering, the following words—

"SOUTH ISLAND, SPITZBERGEN,

"August 17, 1773.

"To whomsoever may find me.

"I, Doctor Angus Sinclair, of Arbroath, Scotland, am the discoverer of a liquid which, injected into a vein, will suspend life for any length of time. I have chosen this spot in which to carry out an experiment to prove to the world that a person may sleep for any period he chooses; and by the aid of an antidote (which I have also discovered) may be awakened at any appointed time.

"I wish to remain dormant for one hundred years or more, and should any one discover me before that time, let him kindly forbear to awaken me.

"Directions to restore Animation.

"Make an incision in a vein of my arm, and inject therein a few drops of the liquor in the blue bottle; in a

few minutes I shall be restored to consciousness. A little hot drink of any kind will greatly facilitate my revival."

When I finished reading the strange document, we looked at each other, then at the doctor, and then at each other again, not quite knowing what to do; but I presently sufficiently recovered from my surprise to hold the lantern close to the old fellow's face, when we were startled to find that the colour still remained in his cheeks, and that the body, instead of being frozen hard, was quite soft and fleshlike.

We lifted the old man from his chair, and tried to lay him out on the floor, but his joints were so set fast that we could not straighten them, so replaced him in his seat.

"Hold on, mates, let us see what the bottles are like," I said, for I could see the necks of three projecting from the box.

"Ah! here's the blue one, and on it a label. Let us see what it says. 'Liquor to restore Animation. Make an incision in the left arm and pour in about six or eight drops.' That's the one we want, mates, but let us see what the others contain. Here is a red bottle, and the label says, 'Aid to Restoration. Infuse a teaspoonful in a gill of warm water, and give the patient to drink.'"

Old Matt Johnson set about finding some bits of driftwood to make a fire, for there was a stove in the cabin; while another ran to the boat to procure some water and a saucepan.

A fire was soon started, and the water made hot: then came the momentous question—

"Who will be surgeon?"

We doubted very much that the specifics in the bottles would have any effect upon the old fellow, who could scarcely be expected to awaken to life again after a sleep of ninety years. The document intimated that one hundred years was the time the doctor wished to slumber, but we thought ninety years quite long enough for a first trial; it would be a record for the world, and beat the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and Rip Van Winkle hollow.

Before commencing to operate on our patient, we examined the other bottle, which was labelled "Sleeping Draught. A. S., 1773. Dose, ten drops with sugar." This we replaced in the box, none of us wishing just then to try its effects.

Johnson at last agreed to make the incision, or as he called it, "the slot," and taking out his jack-knife he whetted it on a piece of stone, giving it a few rubs on his boot to take off the roughness, and then proceeded to rip up the doctor's coat-sleeve. It was one of those tight-fitting lappeted coats, in vogue during the second half of the last century, and quite in keeping with the date on the parchment—1773.

By the way, on scrutinizing the document once more, we discovered these words written on the back—

"At his own request I leave Dr. Sinclair on this island, and have promised to inform the harbour masters at whaling ports on the Scotch coast that he may be found on South Island if one of them will put in for him. He wishes to carry out several experiments of a scientific nature during the winter of 1772-73.

"(Signed), CAPTAIN PHIPPS,
"Naval Surveyor to H.M. King George III."

"Now, Chipps," said I to old Johnson, "are you ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir," said he, flourishing his knife, "ready and eager for the fray. Where shall I stick him, sir?"

"Be careful, now," I replied, "and make a little hole just there," and I pointed to a vein on the left forearm.

Johnson jabbed his knife in as if he were about to kill a pig: it made a wound an inch long and an inch deep, but, strangely enough, no blood flowed. With the aid of a piece off the stem of a tobacco pipe, I injected a few drops of the liquid from the blue bottle, and with open mouths and straining eyes we stood by to watch the result.

Several minutes went by without any apparent effect being noticeable on the old doctor. We felt his pulse, or rather his wrist, for he was as pulseless as the figure-head of a ship, and then tried his heart. We endeavoured to open his mouth to pour in a few drops of the liquor from the red bottle (which we had mixed with warm water), but his teeth were so tightly clenched that we could not give him the "Aid to Restoration."

As we gazed earnestly upon our patient we fancied we saw a movement of his shaggy eyebrows, but put it down to the wind which found its way into the cabin through the open door.

We watched again, and this time, to our great surprise, we saw a twitching at the corners of the mouth, sufficient to cause a movement of the heavy moustache.

I poured in three drops more from the blue bottle, and in a few minutes saw the head of our patient slowly lift and fall back again on his chest.

We tried his mouth again, and this time succeeded in opening his jaws sufficiently wide to force a few drops of the warm liquid into his throat.

Just then two of the men called out simultaneously that the wound in his arm was bleeding. Sure enough such was the case, so, whipping out my handkerchief, I bound up the gaping gash which our friend the carpenter had made.

Slowly the old doctor regained his suspended animation and moved on his chair, and when I raised his eyebrows, which hung down over his eyes like the hair on the forehead of a Skye terrier, I found that his eyes were partially open.

Quietly taking my knife from my pocket I gently cut off the long locks of hair, so that the old man could see about him if he really did come to, after his ninety years' sleep.

He made me start as I shore off his second eyebrow, for he gave a sudden shudder which caused him to tremble from top to toe.

Presently his eyes unclosed a little, and then a little more, till they gradually opened to their widest extent; but no animation or speculation was in them—they were the staring optics of a doll or a corpse.

His hands next began to tremble, and we could see the life creeping into his cramped limbs; and then his lips gave signs of movement. We took the opportunity to give him the remainder of the liquid in the red bottle mixed with water, and the effect was wonderful, for in about half-a-minute the tall figure of Doctor Sinclair half rose, and like a man suffering from delirium tremens, uttered the fierce exclamation of "You rascal!" and fell back on the seat again.

We scuttled out of the cabin like a lot of frightened children, jostling and falling over each other in our eagerness to escape from the presence of the awful-looking being we had brought to life and action.

After running some distance down the pathway or slope, we halted and looked back, as if we expected the Ancient One to follow us, but as he did not make his appearance we gradually and stealthily returned, and emboldened by neither seeing nor hearing anything of the being within, took courage to push the door of the cabin open.

We even went further and looked in, and there we saw the gaunt figure of Doctor Sinclair with palsied hands trying to erect itself by the friendly support of the massive oak table. His legs were so cramped, and, as it were, rusty by his long trance, that he could not straighten them properly, and so weak as to be nearly useless to support his frame. He was a terrible-looking figure as he peered over the table at us, with his grey beard and hair of unheard-of growth flowing down before and behind him in unkempt profusion.

He moaned and mumbled; and then, with a great effort, tried to reach us by concentrating his feeble energies and making a rush at us, but his feet became entangled in his beard, his legs tottered, and down he came, crash upon the hard floor, to all appearances dead.

Then our scattered senses returned to us, and being ashamed of ourselves and our cowardice, we rushed to pick him up, and once more to seat him upon his chair. A little brandy was administered, and presently we had the satisfaction of seeing him regain consciousness.

The fire was replenished, and the doctor laid tenderly

in his berth and snugly covered up. We warmed some tinned soup, which refreshed him marvellously ; so much so that he found his voice, and quietly asked, to our surprise—

“ What year is it ? ”

“ Eighteen hundred and sixty-two,” we replied.

“ What king is reigning in England,” he asked.

“ No king,” was my reply, “ but a queen—Victoria.”

These answers seemed to satisfy him, for he smiled, and smiling fell into a sound sleep.

“ Well, here’s a rummy go,” quoth Chips.

To which we all replied that it was indeed a strange adventure, and upon looking towards the old wooden cot one could hardly believe that the tremendous mass of white seaweed-looking substance trailing from the blanket to the floor, where it lay coiled like a heap of oakum, was ever the growth of a human head ; there it was, however, proof positive before our astonished eyes.

Well, I must not spin my yarn out too long, or I may get it like the old man’s hair—into a tangle.

We stayed at the hut two days, during which the old doctor appeared to gather strength hourly ; so much so that, with assistance, he could walk several yards, and nearly straighten his legs and back.

We made him a comfortable couch in the sledge-boat, covering him with the bear’s skin and a blanket, and all being in readiness we started back northward to Swan Inlet, having abandoned all idea of completing our survey of South Island, at least for the present.

We hoisted a large piece of red bunting at the prow of our sledge, and when we had arrived within about four miles of our destination, we could, with my

binocular, discern little black figures leaving the "Nest" and coming over the ice to assist us back.

We halted between two ice hummocks, got out our stoves, and prepared a savoury meal of bear steaks and tinned soup, both of which, in such intense cold, were exceedingly welcome.

By the time our repast was completed and we had again got under weigh, the foremost of our comrades were nearly within hail. We soon rejoined them, and were very glad of their assistance to help us to tug our increased load over the rough hummocky ice.

We said not a word of our newly-found hairy man, for fear they might want to see him, and thus cause him annoyance. We wished to drag the sledge close to the shore, so that we could carry him right into the cosy "Swan's Nest" at once, and put him to bed.

As we proceeded over the frozen ice and neared home, other men kept coming out to meet us, till all but about half-a-dozen of the whole forty were tailing on to the ropes, and taking the sledge along at a smart trot.

They could tell that there was some mystery attached to the carefully-covered object in the stern, and it was useless for us to try and put them off by saying it was only a heap of bear robes, for now and again the object moved. They would have uncovered it to see what was there, but I sternly forbade them to do so. Guesses of all kinds were made as to what the mysterious heap consisted of, but although many tried to unravel the secret not one succeeded. Some guessed young bears, another a nest of foxes—others said seals, and one averred it could be nothing but a young walrus, from its size and shape, but none hit upon anything near the truth.

The inlet was reached at last, the sledge travelling

over the smooth ice of the haven at a great pace, but not before our gallant skipper was ready on the beach to welcome me and my men back.

We shook hands, and I then told the men to stand back, as I had something I wished to tell the captain. They stood away a few yards, in a circle, so as to completely surround us and the sledge, as if they were afraid it contained something that might escape. Hurriedly I told the captain the principal points of our adventure. He was struck all of a heap, as our American cousins say, and was at first disinclined to credit my story of apparently superhuman return to life.

However, he quietly lifted the blanket, and looking at the uncanny creature beneath, their eyes met. The captain started as if he had seen a savage lion, but quickly regaining his equanimity, gave orders for four hands to bring down a "barrow," as the implement (which looks like a bier) is called. Twenty hands started for the barrow, and in five minutes the doctor was lying on it, while Chips and I walked behind with his surplus beard and hair coiled in our hands, to prevent it from trailing on the ground and throwing the bearers down.

The doctor was put to bed, well fed for two or three days, at the end of which time he could stand, and even walk a short distance alone; and within three weeks was able to form one of the members of our shooting-parties, and although fifty-eight years of age, was as strong and hearty a man as any of us.

* * * * *

Spring at last came, and by July we had a full cargo; consequently, on the last of that month, we steered

south-west, homeward bound for bonny Scotland and the relatives we had been parted from so long.

The doctor, of whom we had grown fond, was a very cheery companion, and looked a strange figure as he walked about the deck, with his carefully-combed and brushed hair and beard coiled neatly round his waist, and usually fastened off with a bit of scarlet bunting.

The wildness of his hilarity seemed at times to point to an unhinged mind, and as the good ship *White Swan* neared her destination, he became so excited that pronounced symptoms of madness appeared. These symptoms increased so rapidly, that when within about five hundred miles of Aberdeen, the poor doctor had to be locked in the captain's cabin. He refused all food, and when it was placed inside the door instantly flung it into the sea from the stern windows.

"Only one more night and part of a day," said the skipper, "and we shall be in Aberdeen, if this breeze holds, when we will immediately have a doctor on board to see to our poor friend and companion, Sinclair."

But it was not to be so ; for next morning, when the captain went to the cabin to ask the doctor how he fared, as was his custom several times during the day, although he only got abuse for his pains, and even threats of violence, he received no answer.

He knocked and knocked again without obtaining a reply, and mounting the companion peered into the cabin through the skylight ; but not a trace of Doctor Sinclair was to be seen.

Finally the cabin door was burst open, and to the regret of all it was found that the doctor had disappeared. There was no mystery about it, for it was a clear case of self-destruction while of unsound mind : he

had leaped out of one of the stern windows and drowned himself.

On reaching port our yarn was soon spread abroad, but of course laughed at by every one, as we had no proof that Doctor Angus Sinclair had ever existed, except in our imagination. True, we had the three bottles and the parchment, and these were in due time sent to the College of Physicians in London, where they were analyzed and commented upon in the medical journals.

What little remained of the "Suspender of Animation" was given to rabbits and dogs, and it really had such a soporific power that they could not be awakened, and, as long as they were kept in an atmosphere below 25°, they remained without signs of decay, even for years after.

Unfortunately, we had used, in restoring the old doctor to animation, all the contents of the blue bottle—three drops excepted. The contents of the red bottle proved, on analysis, to be a concentrated quintessence of brandy, which accounts for the doctor requiring it to be mixed with hot water before being administered.

His idea was that animation might often be usefully suspended in the case of persons out of work, on a voyage, or in embarrassed circumstances; that many, who wished to skip over, as it were, a few years of life,—either for the purpose of evading creditors, or escaping the nagging tongue of a contentious wife—would welcome his discovery and hail it, indeed, as the greatest of all possible boons.

Certain it is that had the doctor lived to patent his idea, he would have completely revolutionized the social world. If our skipper had only clapped on the "darbies" when he put the doctor in his cabin, we might now be living in strangely-altered times.

Just pause and deliberate on what wonders might have happened, but for the untimely madness and death of Doctor Angus Sinclair.

You, gentle reader, will probably come to the conclusion that my yarn is like Heathen mythology—very fair reading, but without much to recommend it in the way of truth.

If, however, you should require further proof of the authenticity of my story, you have only to fit out a suitable yacht, sail for Spitzbergen, hunt about for South Island, and having found it, you will probably also find the hut just as I have described it, perched half-way up the cliffs, in a bay (on the south of the island, mind you) ; and if you enter the said hut and search on the shelf over the wooden berth, you will find all that remains of Doctor Angus Sinclair ; a relic that we in our hurry left behind ; a relic that will prove my yarn to be strictly true, for the memento consists of the grand old doctor's wonderful eyebrows.

Strange to say, amid the scores of stories which I heard in all parts of England, but few of them were connected with ghosts, visions, or apparitions, and from this paucity of tales of the supernatural, I have come to the conclusion that the majority of such stories are somewhat mythical and usually mere hearsay, not even second-hand versions of something that has really happened, but stories told by the fireside in the first place, and afterwards handed from mouth to mouth with

numerous additions and alterations to suit places and individuals, until at length they become so changed and distorted that their inventors would not recognize the offspring of their own imagination, should they at any subsequent period listen to their recital.

Usually, after a story had been told, if I put the question, "Did you see this?" the answer would be, "Oh, no; John Williams told me about it, and I believe he heard it from Tom Smith." A search for Tom Smith would only result in the fact that he had heard it from Harry Jones, etc., so that, strive as one might, the actual participator in the gruesome adventure one wished to fathom could never be discovered.

One very cold December day I happened to be passing through North Somersetshire, and whilst in the vicinity of Minehead, made the acquaintance of a farmer who was also a blacksmith. My stove had broken down, and one or two odd jobs of ironwork required to be done, so I procured the services of my new acquaintance, and when the various little repairs had been finished, invited him to share my evening meal, and join me in a pipe and hand at cards.

He was nothing loath, and stayed. Of course my usual ghoulish thirst for a story possessed me, and I endeavoured to obtain one from my guest, but he affirmed that he could no more tell a story than I could put him to sleep. Nothing memorable, he averred, had ever occurred during his life, so how could he tell of what had never happened?

Then we fell to speaking of farming and crops, horses and fields, and among other items he mentioned that his best crops were obtained from the field in which my van was then located, called the Haunted Field.

“What,” thought I, “the haunted field! this must be seen into.”

And see into it I did, for five minutes later my guest was in a hypnotic trance, and from his lips I gathered the following very Christmassy story.

X.

THE PHANTOM RIDERS.

"ONCE upon a time" might fittingly be the initial words of this story, for the terrible events of which it is a narration took place long, long years ago ; in fact, at the end of the seventeenth century.

To be precise, the day on which the stirring narrative commences was December 23, 1695, two hundred years ago this very Christmas, but heaven protect us from such a dreadful Christmastide as that.

The old Manor House at Minehead, in Somersetshire, no longer exists, for the legends attached to it were of such a terrifying nature, that no one dare rent it after the death of John Simmonds in 1696, so that being uncared for, the old house lingered and decayed till it looked an ideal picture of "desolation."

Haunted or no, there was something so uncanny in the appearance of the old gables, fast tottering to ruin, that even in the crepuscular light of early evening, persons would hurry by it with a shudder, while later at night, many would go a long way round rather than pass its weather-worn walls. The very air that blew past the ruin seemed to gather a deathly fragrance, which was

doubtless due to the fast-rotting timbers of the floors and ceilings.

Be that as it may, the evil repute of the old house grew so great, and such dreadful stories were current concerning its sights and sounds, that it was some years ago pulled down, the ground ploughed up, and crops now flourish where, for generations, owls and bats held their habitation undisturbed.

Minehead Manor House was an Elizabethan red-brick structure, with tall twisted chimneys, curved gables, and dormer windows peeping out from the red clay tiles. Its grounds were extensive, its gardens prim, and its fish-pond well stocked with carp, eel, and pike ; for John Simmonds, the owner, was fond of wandering about and improving his domain. His gardens and fish-pond were his hobbies, and so fully occupied his entire time that he was seldom seen in the village, where he was greatly respected and admired for his kindness to the poor, while his grand old English appearance had all the stateliness of a typical country squire.

He had an only daughter, Julia, an accomplished young lady as accomplishments went in those days. She could sing and accompany herself upon the spinet, could embroider beautifully, spin, and generally comport herself as a young lady of twenty-three should, who has a whole household on her shoulders.

Of lady friends she had few, and her gentlemen friends were even still more scarce. One young gentleman, Wynne Clarge (a distant relative), who lived near, assumed, probably because of the non-existence of any rival, that he should some day claim her for his wife, but he was very apathetic in the matter. There was little real *love* between them ; they were passable friends,

and that was all; he looked upon Julia as he did upon his horse—they were both nice in their way, and ministered to his wants; for the rest he took everything as a matter of course, simply because he had no rival.

Things were running in their usual groove, when one day, early in December, a gentleman was announced, who had called to pay his respects to Mr. Simmonds.

It was soon explained that he was Charles Benwell, the son of Mr. Simmonds' sister, who had for many years resided in Virginia.

The cousins (for Charles was invited to stay at the Manor House for a few weeks) fell in love with each other at first sight, and the love was so sincere and intense, that ere three weeks had passed, Mr. Simmonds was solicited for Julia's hand.

"Quick work, my boy," quoth the genial old man. "Why, you have scarcely had time to know each other yet. It puts me in mind of Julius Cæsar, does this visit of yours, 'He came, he saw, he conquered,' and so have you, apparently. Well, well, we shall see. But you must not expect a fat dowry with her, for she can sing, 'My face is my fortune,' like the maid in the song; but still she will not be penniless—no, no! I will see that she has a suitable maintenance."

"As to that, Mr. Simmonds, you know I am over here for the purpose of selling the property which my poor mother—your sister—has left me. There are three estates of considerable size, amounting in the aggregate to something like twelve hundred acres, besides several houses, the documents appertaining to which I have left at the solicitor's at Dulverton.

"Now, Mr. Simmonds, tell me, have you any objection

to my looking upon your daughter as my affianced bride?"

Mr. Simmonds had no objection, but being a very cautious, business man, would like just a glance at the documents empowering Charles to sell his late mother's estates, simply as a matter of precaution, and to ascertain if there were a flaw anywhere that might cause any delay in the disposal of the property.

"As to that," rapturously vociferated Benwell, "the papers shall be in your hands by this time to-morrow, so that you may search them through, and then on glorious Christmas Eve give your sanction and blessing to our engagement."

"Only fancy being engaged on Christmas Eve, Julia!" exclaimed Charles. "How romantic! It is like the beginning of a story-book."

* * * * *

From the day of Benwell's arrival, Wynne Clarge had roamed about the house and grounds, snarling at every one and everything. He had treated Julia very rudely, and one day suddenly asked her—

"What is that fellow dangling about after you for? I will not have it, Julia."

"But, Wynne," his fair cousin replied, "it can surely be no business of yours if he wishes to pay me attention; he is my cousin, and who knows but he may make me a proposal before he leaves Minehead?"

All this was said coquettishly, but looking up at Wynne she was frightened at the look of hatred she perceived on his face.

"A proposal he *may* make, but your husband he shall never be while I wear this by my side," and he touched



“His sword point, which was advanced towards the spectators, was seen to be covered with blood.”—p. 215.

the hilt of his rapier significantly, as he strode off down the garden path.

From that day he sought to quarrel with young Benwell, and his relations with Mr. Simmonds became so strained, that the old gentleman grew alarmed at his manner, and quietly but firmly forbade him the house.

"It is not your house or lands I want," exclaimed the irate Wynne; "but hark ye, old man, Julia shall be my wife and no other's; willy-nilly she *shall* be mine. I have waited for years, and will not be baulked by this sallow-faced American loon! Let him have his holiday, and go as he came, and leave Julia in my hands, or—I will know the reason why!"

* * * * *

It was Christmas Eve, and Squire Simmonds had invited a few of the neighbouring gentry to spend the evening sociably together under his roof. Wynne had been invited with the rest, for at Christmastide the squire could not be at variance with any man; but in the evening no Wynne appeared. This gave rise to some little comments among the guests, who good-naturedly twitted pretty Julia with having two strings to her bow.

She blushed and bore it, only looking anxiously now and again at the face of the old clock at the end of the dining-room, for it was past the hour when Charley had promised he would return; for he had gone over to Dulverton in the morning to fetch the required documents. He had promised to be back by six o'clock, and it was now eight, and both Julia and her father began to exchange glances of alarm.

At nine o'clock the guests also became anxious, and Mr. Simmonds tried to persuade both himself and those present that all was right.

"You see, it is fifteen miles from here to Dulverton," said Mr. Simmonds. "Possibly he did not start till six o'clock; then he had to make a *détour*, so as to call at Stoke-Pero and deliver a message to one of Julia's friends, and that would make his homeward journey eighteen or twenty miles, and thirty-five miles there and back is a longish ride. Besides, his horse, Old Maggy, is none too good for a long trot over this hilly country. Fill up, my friends! Here's to our future squire, Charles Benwell?"

He raised the goblet to his lips, but had not commenced to quaff, when looking towards the door, he saw the absent Charley advancing toward the table, looking extremely pale. All in the room rose in greeting, but he turned from them, and unbuckling the clasp of his riding-cloak, walked to an alcove, formerly an immense fire-place, but now used as a closet for hanging outdoor coats, wraps, and accoutrements, a curtain being drawn across it.

To their surprise, every one present noticed, as he turned, that his deep white collar (which was the fashion of those days) was saturated with blood, and as they noted this, and had the words on their lips to speak to him about it, he disappeared into the alcove by walking, as it seemed, *right through the curtain*, and not drawing it aside in the usual way!

The assembled guests stood aghast.

What could it mean?

For a long time not a man stirred. But at length the spell was broken by a young fellow named William

Rayner advancing to the curtain sword in hand : he snatched it suddenly aside.

The recess was empty !

Charles Benwell had apparently vanished through the solid wall !

The curtain fell from Rayner's grasp as he stood immovable with amazement. Then came another long pause ; a consultation ; a replenishment of glasses ; and finally the conclusion was arrived at that it was the apparition of Julia's lover they had seen.

Fear now settled on them all, and as they sat, talking in hushed tones and glancing nervously about, the curtain guarding the alcove was seen to move.

It bulged out slightly as if caught by a draught of air, and then again its long, sombre folds trailed upon the floor and were still again.

No one moved from the spot where he happened to be sitting or standing, but all eyes were fixed in horror on the agitated tapestry.

Again it swayed.

This time the bold Will Rayner rose, and drawing his sword, was joined by some of the others, also sword in hand. Rapidly they advanced across the intervening space, and Rayner, plucking hold of the fabric with his left hand, drew it aside with a quick jerk.

Wonder of wonders, in place of the white-faced Benwell there stood his scowling rival, Wynne Clarge.

His right wrist was bared, and his sword point, which was advanced towards the spectators, was seen to be covered with blood.

As they looked with startled eyes, the blood slowly dripped to the floor, drip—drip—drip !

“ How now, Master Clarge, think you to frighten us

with such tomfoolery?" exclaimed Will Rayner. "Get thee gone with thy mummeries, or my sword shall teach thee a lesson not to make fools of thy betters."

Then, rushing forward, he attempted to beat the sword out of Wynne's hand with his own, but to his amazement no clang of steel sounded as their weapons met.

"Here's at thee, Wynne," cried the now enraged man; and suiting the action to the word, he made a deadly thrust at his opponent's breast: the blade pierced the figure without any resistance, and struck the wall so violently that it was knocked out of his hand and rolled clattering on the floor.

At the attack and thrust Wynne looked straight at his assailant, smiled sardonically, and—*slowly melted away*.

* * * * *

The guests stayed all night, sleeping where they best could, at least those whose eyelids had the power to close; while the more nervous scarce dare move from the room for fear of encountering one or other of their ghostly visitors.

It was useless trying to search the wild country between Minehead and Dulverton while it was yet dark, but with the first grey light of a dull morning—Christmas Day—a party of eight gentlemen rode off in search of the missing Charles Benwell.

Through Selworthy they silently rode, and turning to the left entered the lovely woods of Korner. Hills rose to a great height on either side of the valley up which they travelled; hills that seemed to touch—aye, and really did touch—the low-lying dun-coloured snow-clouds. There was a rough kind of path, which ran beside the brook—now swollen to a mountain torrent—

but at best it was a mere cattle track, and was now fast becoming obliterated by the silently falling snow.

The men rode on, scarcely speaking a word ; the only sound that was heard was the roar of the turbulent torrent as it tore through its rocky bed on its way to the sea at Porlock.

Presently they heard a horse neigh, and making at once towards the sound, quickly found poor Old Maggie grazing at the foot of Dunkery Beacon near the village of Stoke Pero.

The snow was now falling so fast that not the sharpest eye could perceive the summit of the Beacon, which towered sixteen hundred feet above them.

"Coup ! coup ! Maggie," coaxingly cried Will Rayner, and the mare, whinnying, trotted to him. She was still saddled, and they found, as they feared to find, both upon the saddle and back, stains of blood.

"Follow up, friends," said Will, "as rapidly as possible, for if I mistake not, our poor friend lies not far away, and if we make not the best of our way, the snow may hide from us that which we seek."

They accordingly travelled on much quicker, and as they turned to cross the rustic bridge, at the foot of the hill from which Stoke Pero looks dreamily down, they found poor Benwell, lying on his face, dead, frozen stark and stiff, and partly covered with snow as with a winding-sheet.

They dismounted, and examined the murdered man, discovering to their amazement and horror that he had been run through the base of the neck from *behind*, by some cowardly hand.

The body was laid over the back of a horse, and four of the gentlemen returned with it to the Manor

House, while Will and the other three friends prosecuted their search for Wynne Clarge.

This search, however, was in vain ; no signs of him could be found, and after wandering about in the snow for a long time they returned to Minehead.

It was indeed a sad Christmas Day for the good folks of the Manor House, which instead of being a place of rejoicing was now a house of the deepest sorrow.

Poor Julia was inconsolable.

No papers relating to the property were found on the body, and this gave some clue to Wynne's reason for waylaying the poor young fellow.

Benwell was buried in the churchyard which lies high upon the hill, a churchyard surrounded by walls that look out over the quiet town like the ramparts of a fortress dominating a city.

A week later, a great commotion was caused by the news being brought, that Wynne's body had been discovered in the trout pool, which lies nearly hidden under the great hill near Stoke Pero.

True it was, and for him too—murderer as well as murdered—a resting-place was found in the quiet hill-top churchyard.

* * * * *

The missing papers could not be discovered, although the woods had been searched in all directions, and as the unusually cold winter gave place to the genial early spring, people began to look upon the tragedy as a thing of the past, and talked no more of it.

Poor Julia drooped and faded ; but with the advent of the lovely warm May days she revived, and, by and by, became her own sweet self again ; not quite so tuneful in her songs as of yore, but still her father's own

little warbling bird, for he delighted in music and in singing, particularly the songs his daughter sang to him of an evening.

Summer came with its flowers, and autumn with its grain and fruit, and then—then came cold dreary winter once more.

Christmas approached, but this year, instead of the usual jovial party at the Manor House, Julia and her father accepted an invitation to spend a few days with the sporting rector of Stoke Pero. They arrived at the Rectory on the 22nd of December (a Monday), and were invited to stay over Christmas Day, which was on the Thursday.

Julia was not at all in good spirits, and was evidently thinking of the dreadful Christmas a year ago and her lost love. She brooded so that, as Christmas Eve approached, she was positively unable to hide her state of intense nervousness and melancholy, and at noon on the 24th she felt herself so unwell that she implored her father to take her home.

Mr. Simmonds and the worthy parson took counsel together, and as Julia appeared in a high state of nervous excitement bordering on fever, they gave her a sleeping draught, placing her in the chimney corner in the Rector's great arm-chair. There she slept for three hours, but when she awoke, again implored her father to take her home, as she felt so ill and did not wish to give her kind hosts trouble.

There was no resisting this second appeal, so after a little delay in getting ready, they mounted their horses, and with a boy riding a pony and carrying a lantern in advance, they set off on their journey homeward.

The snow lay thick on hill and tree, and they made

but slow progress. The lantern gave but little light ; it bobbed about hither and thither like an *ignis fatuus*, and finally the boy's pony stumbled, and boy, pony, and lantern were buried in a deep snow-drift. The boy scrambled out quickly, but by the squire's orders did not light his lantern again. They crossed the bridge and picked their uncertain way along the snow-covered path by the torrent's brink.

Suddenly the squire drew rein as a man rode quickly and silently past them, over the snow, going in the same direction as themselves.

"How like Old Maggie," said the squire half aloud ; "and if I did not know to the contrary, I could have sworn that the rider was poor Benwell!"

The squire supported Julia with his left arm as she rode by his side, cheering her as best he could.

"Who was that, father?" she asked. "How strange he did not speak as he passed us by."

"It was indeed, my dear," he rejoined ; "but probably he was a stranger, and unaccustomed to our hearty West Country greetings. But see, he has stopped and dismounted."

They beheld him in the moonlight standing by his horse's side, but for some reason the squire's horse and his daughter's both stopped of their own accord, while the boy's pony wheeled round and dashed back towards Stoke.

The strange horseman patted his steed's neck, tightened the saddle-girth, and was about to remount, when another man suddenly bounded forward, with a drawn sword, and making a lunge at the unfortunate traveller, thrust him, from behind, right through the neck.

Then the murderer searched the dying man, taking

a large bundle of papers from the saddle-bags, and transferring them to his own pockets.

Turning once more to his victim, who was not dead, but feebly struggling in the snow to regain his feet, he again stabbed him, this time clean through the heart. Then, with a malignant smile he turned away, strode to his own horse, which was tethered to a tree hard by, mounted, and in a trice galloped close past the spell-bound onlookers.

As he galloped silently by, the squire beheld, to his astonishment, the features of Wynne Clarge!

Thus was re-enacted, in phantom-vision, the murder of Charles Benwell, as it took place twelve months before.

Trembling in every limb Mr. Simmonds turned to his daughter. But Julia was no more, *his arm encircled her lifeless clay.*

* * * * *

An old man and feeble was John Simmonds, when, two months after the above events, he left his bed, slowly recovering from brain-fever; but although he was able occasionally to wander listlessly in his garden in the warm days of the summer, he lingered only till the first days of autumn tinged the foliage with gold and red, then drooped like the flowers, and like the flowers he died.

By his daughter's side, upon that hillside in the west, the old man sleeps, and to this day their tombs are pointed out; the one known as "the Good Squire's Tomb," and the other is called "Julia's Grave."

* * * * *

When the next Christmas Eve came round, bold Will Rayner organized a little party to watch the spot where the murder took place. They did not keep their dread vigil in vain, for a little after darkness set in they all

saw the phantom horseman ride up, dismount to tighten his saddle-girth, and pat his tired horse on the neck. They saw the dastardly rush of his rival: they saw the deed enacted before their eyes, as Mr. Simmonds and Julia had seen it in a marvellous manner, and Will had difficulty in restraining his comrades from rushing upon the murderous Wynne, although they knew him to be but the phantasm of a man.

Their purpose, however, in watching was to *follow* the ghost, and as it mounted its shadowy horse they all gave chase.

It was a wild sight to see these young men following the apparition, who pursued his course through the wild woods apparently unconscious that he was being followed.

For three miles he rode, and then drew rein by a low cliff which overhung the stream. He dismounted, took the bundle of papers from under his cloak, and hid them beneath the stump of a tree, whose roots flung themselves in fantastic shapes from the side of the cliff. Then he mounted his horse again, with a smile of triumph on his ghastly face, rode up the precipitous bank, and had nearly gained the brink, when his horse missed its footing, rolled over backwards with its rider, and both disappeared into the turbid water below.

The ghostly horse quickly emerged and galloped away, but the shade of Wynne Clarge, its rider, rose no more.

A search was made in the low cliff for the missing documents relating to the Benwell estate, and they were easily found; but having lain in a damp cavity impregnated with lime for two years, they fell to pieces as Rayner grasped them, and all that remained in his hand was an undecipherable pulp.

CONCLUSION.

The Wise and Foolish Virgins among them carried ten lamps ; and strangely enough, that number coincides with the number of stories in this volume. In five lamps no oil was poured, so that the lamps gave forth no light, but the remaining lamps were well filled and shed forth light on all around. Such may, I trust, be the case with my stories ; some of them may to my readers appear dull and uninteresting, but in the remaining moiety I trust some gleams of pleasure may be found, which, if not shedding forth the electric rays of a Poe, may yet give forth enough intellectual light to cause the writer to be seen and appreciated by the public as one who has not wholly failed to use his pen to the pleasure of his indulgent readers.

Probably my penchant for listening to stories wrung from unwilling guests is highly reprehensible ; but I am sorry to say that my hobby has quite taken the bit between its teeth, and, instead of my riding and controlling, it has mastered me.

Some of my friends, probably my truest friends, prophesy, and I must say with some grounds for their forecasts, that I stand a good chance of seeing the interior of a gaol—my crime that of divulging the

secrets of persons whose brains I have used as a kind of mental sponge. These good friends regard me as an ogre, prowling over the country on wheels, and robbing those to whom I have given sanctuary and shown hospitality in my humble caravan home.

Probably they are right ; but why in these days of dearth of original and uncommon stories, should persons be allowed to carry such interesting narratives about with them in a dog-in-the-manger style, when by the exercise of a little ingenuity I am able to obtain their hoarded narratives, and use them for the public good ? Surely the end justifies the means, from a literary point of view.

The hypnotic seizure of tales untold is a simple art, and if any of my readers (those having secret family skeletons preferred) will call upon me, I will with pleasure show them how to hunt for a story. The hunter and the quarry only are needed ; noisy hounds to worry the poor quarry are not required, the hunter does it all quietly and effectively by himself, just as that watchful assassin, the spider, interviews the interesting and toothsome fly.

THE END.



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